

TOUCHING SPIRITS:
Story and Relationship in an
Aboriginal Teacher Education Program



**A Thesis Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and
Research in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Education in the Department of Curriculum Studies
College of Education, University of Saskatchewan**

By

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1998

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ABSTRACT

This study is a description of the meanings pre-service teachers and their instructor (myself) gain in the experience of learning to teach in an Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP). Using stories of teaching, oral and written, we searched together for the essence of teaching in a journey of self-awareness and a journey of discovering what it means to be human. We storied, restoried and reflected on our experiences as we lived our lives and made new meanings about who we are and who we want to be as teachers.

In this research project, I present stories given to me by my nine participants (third-year/pre-intern students) in their teaching autobiographies and and our oral storytelling sessions. To describe the knowledge I gained in receiving my students' stories, I combined their individual stories into collective narratives. I lived and relived my students' experiences, as told to me through story, and wrote their stories as collective narratives to represent the collective knowledge we gained as a community. The collective narratives are not meant to romanticize the lives of my students. Theirs are not lives without conflict. I know my students as unique individuals with many different experiences. The collective narratives are descriptions of their collective knowledge as told through story.

Storytelling honours the ways of Aboriginal learning. The design of this study was influenced by the belief that all learning begins and ends with the spirit. I honour this tradition by using Cajete's visioning cycle (Look to the

mountain: An ecology of Indigenous education, 1994) as my pathway. Each chapter, one through nine, follows this cycle which begins and ends with a vision, the centering place where the “soul of the dream” is honoured. The visioning cycle is an inward journey and each stage is a step towards learning what it means to be human and the importance of relationship to self, others and the world. Cajete’s visioning cycle allowed me to be passionate about my learning, to make meaning through my heart and my mind, to respect the spirit that moves us and to honour and respect the ways of knowing of the people I teach and learn from.

In this research, I find a new value for story in teacher education. Through the telling of personal stories of experience, student teachers and their instructors negotiate for new meanings of what it means to teach and new meanings of the qualities they hope to possess as teachers. Nel Noddings, in her research, discusses the power and importance of “relationship” to self and to others. We are who we are in our relations with others. In a journey of self-awareness and in the giving and receiving of stories as pedagogy in teacher training, the importance of compassion, humility, courage, hope and love has new meaning.

You, the reader, will bring different experiences and new meanings as you read this research story. Like my students and me, you will create a new collective story.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank my nine participants in this study, my students who have given me the knowledge and magic of their stories. "This thesis is for you. You will create many new stories and meanings in your journey of teaching and learning. It has been an honour to weave our evolving stories into a dance of meaning. Thank you for your time, commitment, honesty and courage. Thank you for trusting me with your stories."

I thank all of my students, past and present, for allowing me to share my story of learning that came from them. "You have been and will be my teachers".

A very special thank you to Elaine Sukava, colleague and friend, for designing the print on the title page of this thesis. "Elaine, you are a gifted artist". (This design, *I Believe I Can Fly*, was used as the theme for the graduation ceremony of six participants in this study.)

Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Angela Ward and Rita Bouvier for your diligent readings of this text and your support in the process. I am indeed grateful. Thank you to Dr. Pat Renihan for acting as the external examiner and for giving me your support. And a special thank you to my advisor, Dr. Sam Robinson. "You gave me the confidence to keep going and edited my work with sincere interest and commitment. Thank you for letting me do it my way!😊 "

The faculty here at SUNTEP have been my inspiration and my mentors. "You have given me support, love and care through this long journey and guided

me with your knowledge. Thank you: Vicki for your wisdom, Donna for your patience and help with technology, Michael for your sensitivity, Kathy for your laughter and comfort, Elaine for your genuine enthusiasm, Murdine for all of your special touches and encouragement, Lon for the gift of magic in your words and Bente for being my 'soul mate', my friend. You are all, my teachers".

I am joyous for the gift Louise Legare has given us with her thesis. "You have opened a new pathway for others to follow. Thank you for your collective story that came to me at just the right time. It is a mystery!"

Dr. Gregory Cajete allowed me to follow a pathway that opened up my spiritual being. I am thankful for this journey of visioning and celebrate my learning with my whole heart and soul. "Thank you, Dr. Cajete (*Look to the mountain: An ecology of Indigenous education*, 1994) for the guidance of the Visioning Cycle at this moment in my life. I hope I have used it in a good way".

My two children, Brandi and Tyler, and my partner Neil, have been on this journey with me. "Your stories fold into my story and my story folds into your stories. I love you for your patience, tolerance and understanding. I love you for making my story. Thank you Neil, for always believing in me more than I believe in myself. I am because we are! Thank you Brandi, for always being my greatest fan, for your tears of joy and for being the best friend a daughter could be. Thank you Tyler, for your 'grand stories', for touching me with your tenderness and for being your very unique self. I mean this in the nicest possible way".

DEDICATION

To My Grandma, Emma Maude Spence

(1891-1991)

**Whose spirit and stories dance in my soul
and lead me down the path**

To My Mom and My Dad

**Whose gifts are planted deep inside
and make my stories grow**

To Neil, My Best Friend

**Whose love makes me grow stronger
day by day**

To Brandi and Tyler

**Whose circle of stories live in my heart
now and forever**

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PROLOGUE

Humans are storytelling animals. Story is a primary structure through which humans think, relate, and communicate. We make stories, tell stories and live stories because it is such an integral part of being human. Myths, legends, and folk tales have been cornerstones of teaching in every culture. ... The myths we live by actively shape and integrate our life experience. They inform us, as well as form us, through our interaction with their symbols and images. (Cajete, 1994, p. 116)

We live in a world dominated by a paradigm with the perspective that knowledge is objective, rational, logical and context free. To speak from the heart rather than from the mind, to speak from experience rather than from some well known text or theorist - these views have only recently been accepted (by some) as a valid form of knowledge and a way of knowing. I have never been able to separate my knowing from my heart. My knowing is intrinsically linked to the relationship I have with self, others and the world around me. Relationship connects my mind and my heart with the minds and the hearts of others. In this thesis I explore, through collective narrative, story as a paradigm that connects relationship with knowledge and knowing, a perspective from the heart. I explore story, expressed through voice, as a meaning-making strategy in learning to teach, a perspective from the soul that connects us to the world and

to each other.

Story weaves together thought and feeling, gives life and breath to the meaning of experience and thus creates knowledge. Teaching is a personal discovery of meaning, "inexorably linked to one's identity and, thus, one's life story" (Carter, 1995, p. 327). My students and I story to explain and come to understand ourselves in order that we can better understand who we are as teachers and the teachers we hope to be. We story as a way to think about what we already know and to make new experiences meaningful. Through storytelling, oral and written, my students and I learn from each other about the world of teaching: "a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and everchanging" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 6). Our stories form and inform us as we reflect on our experiences to make meaning. As we tell our collective stories we create community knowledge of the meaning of teaching. Our relationship with self and knowing is interconnected in our relationship with each other.

I remember. . .

at the end of my last course as a graduate student, I had to do a presentation on the research I had been doing towards the writing of a thesis. This was an opportunity to explore my thinking, through dialogue, with my instructor and my peers. This was an opportunity

to learn from each other. The idea, or thought, of giving a presentation felt no easier than when it was expected in my other courses, and I wondered why the concept was so frightening. I am a teacher, after all, and speaking in front of a group of peers and sharing what I have learned is no different from teaching. As I think about the focus of my work, story and narrative as a way of knowing, and, the ways in which my students and I use story as a pedagogy in learning to teach, I realize the importance of relationship and learning. I ask myself these questions: How in this presentation, can we learn from each other? How can we share our personal stories of experience and each be heard? And, how do I present a narrative way of knowing in a non-paradigmatic way? For my presentation, I decide we will take the journey. We have a sharing circle.

The circle represents and is a symbol that we are all equal. As we share our stories, we share a part of ourselves. Our heart is placed in the centre, and we build community. The feather, a symbol of respect, is passed around the circle. The person holding the feather is the storyteller and as we listen, we move back and forth from self to other and form our personal visions in relation to each other. We are interconnected in a web of caring. Our breath is a symbol of the expression of our spirit. I borrow this metaphor

from the American Indians who use breath to represent the spirit of all living things (Cajete, 1994, p. 42). Language, the most tangible form of breath, symbolizes our thoughts and our feelings. Through our stories, we make connections and take the journey to create new meanings . . . The feather takes its path around the circle and we share our personal visions about teaching and learning. We story, we laugh and we cry. We learn from each other in the context of relationship. We explore our inner and outer worlds through story; our knowing is interconnected with our being.

This sharing circle represents a process my students and I use in learning to teach. At every moment, through story, we are deeply involved in a relationship with self and other and at every moment, through story, we are deeply involved in relationship as a member of a community. We tell and reflect upon our personal stories of experience in our search for the meaning of learning to teach and teaching to learn. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) state that "education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories" (p. 2). We are all storytellers who tell stories to learn about what we make of the world and our relationship to self and others. We tell stories to discover who we are and who we want to be. In this thesis, I use narrative inquiry and story in my journey to understand how my students and I make sense of our world of learning to teach. We "are both living [our] stories in an

ongoing experiential text and telling [our] stories in words as [we] reflect upon life and explain [ourselves] to others” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). We story and restory our experiences to make meaning and to know.

In this thesis I present stories given to me by my students (in their teaching autobiographies and through an oral storytelling session we had while they were interning) in the form of collective narratives. The journey of learning is never easy - it is an individual as well as a communal, social activity. With all of the stories before me, I asked myself “How do I retell and reflect on the stories my students have presented to me? How do I tell my story of learning?” As I was struggling with these decisions, I came across the thesis work of Louise Legare, *Being a Metis woman: Our lived stories*, (1996). This model of presenting stories as collective narrative provided me with a structure that was meaningful. As stated by Legare, “[I] do not view or understand our stories as separate and apart from each other, writing the [stories] as collective narratives [gives] me the opportunity to best describe my research report from my own perspective” (p. 55) as a teacher/learner in an Aboriginal community. I explore and reflect on my experiences as a way of integrating my learning with the learning of my students. Polkinghorne (1988) states the value of narrative:

The narrative scheme serves as a lens through which the apparently independent and disconnected elements of existence are seen as related parts of a whole. At the level of a single life, the autobiographical narrative shows life as unified and whole. In stories about other lives and in histories of social groups, narrative shows the interconnectedness and significance of seemingly random activities. (p. 36)

The process of writing this thesis through collective narrative allows me the opportunity to reflect on human experience and story as a paradigm of knowing and as a way to gain knowledge. The knowledge I gain in writing this thesis is a collective and collaborative creation. Each of the four collective narratives (presented in Chapters Three to Six) expresses how my participants make meaning of their experiences in learning to teach. The process of writing the collective narratives, from the stories of my students, “involves a process of self-insertion in the other’s story as a way of coming to know the other’s story and as giving the other voice” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). My reflection, following each collective narrative, is a way to describe how I understand and make meaning of the knowledge which is presented in the sharing of stories. The reflections are a personal attempt to understand how knowledge is presented “in stories as they form expressions of related parts of experiences and as they form a whole life experience” (Legare, p. 10). My story and the stories of my students interconnect to create the narrative whole. This thesis describes the knowledge that is gained through collective stories and becomes a community of meaning making.

Legare created the concept of writing her research report using collective narratives as her methodology. Her thinking was influenced by the writings of Polkinghorne and Ridington but the methodology came out of her experience of describing how she, as a Metis woman, makes “meaning out of the stories in order to gain knowledge” (p. 8). She uses collective narrative as “descriptive

narrative research” (p. 8) and cites Polkinghorne (1988) in this type of narrative stance. Polkinghorne (1988) writes,

descriptive narrative research produces an accurate description of the interpretive narrative accounts individuals or groups use to make sequences of events in their lives or organizations meaningful. This research produces a document describing the narratives held in or below awareness that make up the interpretive schemes a people or community uses to establish the significance of past events and to anticipate the consequences of possible future actions. (p. 161-162)

The collective narratives and my reflections are “circles within circles”, always beginning, always ending, new beginnings and new endings. When I read the stories of my students and when I participate in a sharing circle, the knowledge I gain is not from one voice. The knowledge is a collective creation - it becomes one voice of the community. Ridington (1990) explains:

Indian stories do not begin “once upon a time.” They are always beginning and always ending. Like the sun in its journey that ceaselessly defines the days and seasons of our experience, Indian stories move in a constantly transforming pattern of circles within circles. Beginning and end are only points in a person’s experience of the stories’ circles. (Ridington, 1990, p. 3)

(For further discussion on data collection and methodology see Appendix A.)

Before I begin the story, I will introduce you to my community (an Aboriginal teacher education program where I teach and learn) and the pathway of my journey.

A TIME AND A PLACE

First, I introduce you to SUNTEP (Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program), and then more specifically to my community, SUNTEP Prince Albert, where this story takes place. SUNTEP is located in three urban centres: Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert. The program is administered through the Gabriel Dumont Institute, in cooperation with the Saskatchewan Department of Education, Training and Employment, the University of Saskatchewan, and the University of Regina. The SUNTEP program developed from a need to increase the number of teachers of Aboriginal ancestry in Saskatchewan and to improve education for Aboriginal people. As the writer of a SUNTEP evaluation states:

The creation of [SUNTEP] in 1980 grew out of the concerns voiced by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the province. These concerns centered around the perceived failure of the existing educational system to meet the needs of the Aboriginal population in Saskatchewan. At that time, it was reported that by Grade 2, 50% of Aboriginal students had failed at least once, that an estimated 93% of Aboriginal students dropped out by Grade 12, and that Aboriginal students were generally one to three grades behind non-Aboriginal students of the same age in mathematics and reading. (Baillie, 1994, p. 3)

The Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) is the only postsecondary education organization for Metis people in Canada. The objectives of the program as outlined in the SUNTEP Student Handbook are:

- 1) To ensure that people of Indian/Metis ancestry are adequately represented in urban teaching positions.

- 2) To educate teachers who are sensitive to the educational needs of students of Indian/Metis ancestry.
- 3) To educate Indian/Metis graduates who provide positive role models for all students and the educational community as a whole. (1997/98, p. 6).

Prospective SUNTEP students must meet regular or special admission criteria of the university, submit a handwritten letter outlining their reasons for choosing teaching as a profession, and explain their reasons for choosing SUNTEP in particular. They are also required to submit a letter of sponsorship from their Metis Local or Band and three letters of reference. Short-listed applicants are interviewed by a selection committee at one of the SUNTEP centres. During the four-year program, students must maintain a grade point average consistent with university policy as well as meet the established criteria of the three SUNTEP centres for academic achievement, attendance, and professional standards. If students fail to meet any of the established criteria, they receive a letter of review, and three reviews of any type result in students being required to leave the program. Students receive careful counseling throughout the process. The expectations are high for student performance, in part because they demand that of themselves as a collective group. They want and deserve to graduate from a program of excellence.

All courses and instructors must be approved by department heads at the university of affiliation. Although some flexibility in course offerings is allowed,

the program of study is much the same as that of main stream students on campus. Upon graduation from SUNTEP, graduates receive a Bachelor of Education degree from the university (SUNTEP Regina, the University of Regina; SUNTEP Saskatoon and Prince Albert, the University of Saskatchewan).

The mandate of the program as outlined in the SUNTEP Student Handbook (1997/98) is as follows:

- 1) Indian/Metis teachers must be prepared to teach from an Indian/Metis perspective and to teach traditional and modern culture at all levels of the educational system.
- 2) Teachers must be trained to be familiar with the resources of their community, to have the skills to work with children in the context of the social situation in that community, and to establish close parent-teacher relationships.
- 3) Teachers must be trained to select and develop teaching materials which accurately reflect Indian/Metis culture. They should also learn curriculum development skills to ensure that Indian/Metis content become an integral part of teaching and learning. They should be informed, aware and involved in Aboriginal content across the curriculum initiatives.
- 4) SUNTEP students should be familiar with an Aboriginal language since language is the key component of cultural continuation. (p. 5)

The objectives and mandate for SUNTEP guide the delivery of the program. SUNTEP students are required to have Native Studies as their first teaching area and cross-cultural education is integral to all areas of study. It is not so much the content of study but perhaps more the perspective and method of delivery that makes SUNTEP a cross-cultural teacher education program.

Students are required to take a minimum of three credit units in Cree or another Native language. Many of our students speak English as a second language and would choose Cree as a teaching area, but courses do not presently exist at SUNTEP, Prince Albert, to meet this demand. Language is an important issue for many students; this issue we continue to debate.

A tension sometimes exists among those agencies that are involved with the program and its delivery. To what extent do we fit within the existing structure? How much flexibility can we be allowed and still have a program that is seen, or perceived, as equal? These are some of the questions we struggle with as a program. Those who are marginalized do not always have a voice in social structures of hierarchy and power that make decisions on their behalf. Questions of responsibility, ownership and autonomy are often at odds.

So, who are we really? Why do we exist? Are we different or unique? Can we be? We think so. Let's visit the SUNTEP Prince Albert community before I attempt to answer these questions. Or maybe if I tell you about our community (we often refer to ourselves as the SUNTEP family), you will find the answers yourself. Stories are like that, you know.

Prince Albert is a city of thirty-five thousand people located centrally in the province of Saskatchewan, yet considered by many to be the north. Perhaps more accurately, Prince Albert is the gateway to the north, a landscape of forests, lakes, sandy shores, the Canadian shield, and home for many Metis and

First Nations people. The citizens of Prince Albert often identify themselves as residents of one of the four, apparently distinct communities: West Hill, East Hill, West Flat and East Flat. The residents of the "Flats", many of a lower socio-economic status, share a proud connectedness with their communities. Poverty, discrimination and lack of opportunity for employment of Aboriginal people is as prevalent in Prince Albert as in most Canadian cities. Both the East and West Flats have "Community Schools", established by Saskatchewan Education, to serve the particular needs of their student populations which are largely Aboriginal. Within this context exists SUNTEP. Many of our graduates are now teaching in Prince Albert, particularly in the Public School Division. At one community school, we jokingly call the primary wing "SUNTEP Galley". When we visit this school, it feels like home. A lot of hugs and smiles are shared when we walk down the hall.

SUNTEP exists as a program for Metis students; however, there are many First Nations' students at the Prince Albert SUNTEP centre. Because of a contract with the twelve nation Prince Albert Grand Council (PAGC), we are a rich mixture of cultures including Cree, Dene and Dakota. There is much to learn from each other with such a wealth of experience, culture and stories. We are very much a cross-cultural teacher education program.

At present, SUNTEP Prince Albert has eighty-four students enrolled over the four years of study. Our student body varies from regular on-campus students who normally begin university courses at eighteen and nineteen years

of age. Our students often enter SUNTEP by mature entrance. These students come from diverse cultural backgrounds and bring individual uniqueness and experiences to the program. About 90% of these students are women, ranging in age from eighteen to their late forties. A few students are single with no dependents, some are married with children, but a large percentage of students are single mothers. The GDI Update Report (1996), states: "Of the 294 female graduates 207, or 70.4% were single at the time they began the program. Of these single women, 128, or 43.5% of all the women in the program, were single mothers" (p. 9). These students come to SUNTEP with a commitment and determination to provide a future for their children as well as a commitment to improve equality and justice for other Metis and First Nations children.

The courage and strength of the women in this program was at one time amazing to me. Now, I just come to expect it. But I never forget. It is not easy to be a full-time university student and a parent, let alone a single parent. The financial burden students carry is often great. We are a community and a family because we need each other to survive. Laughter, singing, stories, love and caring create a part of the magic we feel at SUNTEP. This is our way of being. The students form lifelong friendships as they tutor, counsel and support each other. The students and faculty work hard every day at sustaining the sense of community and family that has been developed. Our program goes beyond theory and practice. SUNTEP is a story of unfolding lives as we critically examine who we are, why we exist, and what are our responsibilities, our needs,

our dreams, our visions and our futures.

SUNTEP Prince Albert has six faculty members of whom I am one. The responsibilities of each faculty member vary, but each teaches a six credit course within the academic year, and some faculty teach during intersession/summer school. All faculty have an open door policy and are available for counseling at any time. Instructors for other courses are carefully chosen; many are residents of the Prince Albert area and a few are from the College of Education in Saskatoon. Students complete course evaluations at the end of each term and careful consideration is given to their feedback when we choose the content and instructors for future courses. As an off-campus program, we are fortunate to be able to selectively choose those instructors who teach from a philosophy consistent with SUNTEP and those who are sympathetic to the needs of our students.

Given that the program of study is very similar to regular on-campus courses, with some flexibility, what makes SUNTEP unique from other teacher education programs, or at least those on campus? Hopefully, I have provided you with some of the answers. I find SUNTEP's uniqueness difficult to describe with words, for most of what I know about SUNTEP is what I feel.

Our small numbers alone make us different. Faculty and students come to know each other on a very intimate basis. Decisions regarding course content, pedagogy, policies and daily events are based on the needs and context of our students' lives. At our centre, building community and being a

community affects all decisions. When conflicts or problems do arise, they are dealt with in the spirit of respect and the need to take care of wounded spirits. There is no place to hide from the "heartbeat". Our lives are interconnected. In one of our student's words:

It is impossible to mention all of the things that make SUNTEP P.A. such a special place. If I could attribute one quality that is irreplaceable, it would be community connectedness. In so many ways, SUNTEP P.A. strives to give to the community. We reach out in our activities, and our commitments. As students, we come to know more than just a classroom, we come to know people. Each one of us has a different philosophy of teaching, but knowing the heartbeat of the community affects that philosophy in an empowering way. It makes us aware of our responsibilities to the community, to the Elders, the adults, and especially, to the children. (Vizina, 1994, p. 4)

Building community begins on the first day a student enters SUNTEP. We have a three-day orientation to the program where we play games, tell stories, visit a historical Metis site and talk about commitment and responsibility. Bonds and friendships begin. Every Friday, we have a communal lunch prepared in turn by year-one, year-two, and year-three students. The lunch is followed by a student/staff meeting. This forum allows everyone the opportunity to participate as an equal in the day-to-day running of the centre, discuss upcoming events, and to just laugh and have fun.

From their first year in the program students prepare and present workshops. The first-and third-year students work together each year to give storytelling workshops for several schools. Second-year students plan thirty

plus workshops for the PAGC Fine Arts Festival in the spring of every year. The demands in and around Prince Albert are high for cross-cultural education and our centre responds to this call. Students also receive requests to tutor elementary and high school students who are experiencing difficulties, often because of language differences. Time is our only limitation.

SUNTEP Theatre is a powerful and empowering voice of our students, our program and Metis and First Nations people. Through the medium of contextual theatre, students explore issues of gender, race and class. Through drama and story, students engage in an exploration of what truly is transformational education. SUNTEP Prince Albert has in many ways formed its identity around SUNTEP Theatre. The spell of the stories they tell continues to weave magic for many.

We have a resident Elder, who is an honoured guest and friend of our centre. She conducts a women's circle once a week and is available for support to students who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. Other Elders visit the centre and classrooms on a regular basis. The Elder's storytelling is a valuable source of knowledge for students as they prepare to be teachers.

Near the end of September, we move our classrooms outdoors for a two day Cultural Camp, organized by the second-year students. We spend the first half day in a circle listening to the Elders, followed by nature walks, learning crafts, playing games - creating unity and connectedness. I have just returned from camp, as I write this, and words I have heard ring in my heart: "when a

child's spirit is hurting, treat that child gently"... "the most important thing in classroom management is caring about and loving your students"... "my father told me this will be your classroom now, the forest"... "each of you has a trail; sometimes you will get off that trail, but your responsibility is to find your way back"... "everyone of you has a special gift"... "everything on this earth is interdependent"... "you will gain knowledge but will you have the wisdom to use it?"... I will remember more of the Elders' words in the days to follow. I will make new meanings. Stories are like that.

SUNTEP Prince Albert is a place of storytelling, story giving and story receiving. We honour and participate in each other's stories as part of the experience of learning to teach. We honour and participate in stories because the oral tradition of storytelling among Aboriginal people has forever been the way of teaching and learning. Important lessons are learned through story, as stated by one Elder at our recent Cultural Camp, "not to give the answers but to make you use that thing between your two ears". (Humour is often part of the story.) Through all of our activities, celebrations, courses of study and relationships, we promote a collective community and family. Story is the method, the process, and the lived experience of our centre. Stories are everywhere.

We often say at SUNTEP that most of what students learn, they learn from each other. And the other significant part of their learning occurs in the time they spend in the classroom working with children and their reflection on

this process. The elders often say you have to hear and experience something four times before you will remember. Field experience is carefully planned into the first, second and third year of our program followed by the extended practicum (internship) in the fourth year. In each year of the program, we have a core class that focuses on the developmental nature of learning to teach. Students build on a wide range of experiences over the four years. They revisit and reconstruct theories, ideas, beliefs, themselves as people, and thus create new meanings in their journeys of learning. I teach and supervise the third-year students who spend four weeks in a classroom as pre-interns.

My Pathway

Story, as a way of knowing, honours the ways of knowing of Aboriginal people, who are the people I teach and learn from. In the oral tradition of Aboriginal cultures, stories were handed down from generation to generation to teach the history of the people and to teach about the good ways to live one's life, and our relationship to the environment, nature and creation. In Aboriginal communities, the old ones (elders, grandmothers and grandfathers) shared their knowledge and wisdom gained from life experience, through the telling of stories. In an interview with Joanne Archibald (1992), Ellen White, "a respected storyteller, author, and healer" (p. 150), speaks about how stories tap into the subconscious of the listener and how it is the listener's responsibility to think about the stories and the messages they give. Ellen White says this about the

Elders and learning:

They always say if you don't go inside, you don't look at yourself inside, you're not going to be learning deeply. They said it would be surface learning. Surface learning, it will be just on top of the brain, they said. Not the brain that you want touched. We have two brains, they said. One we use every day, and the other one is in the back of the head, and we use it when it allows us to use it or when we are lucky enough to tap into it. I always call this the subconscious mind. They always said the subconscious mind carries with it very important knowledge. (in Archibald, 1992, p. 152)

To honour the perspective of Aboriginal knowing, I must "go inside myself" to learn deeply. Central to this concept is spirituality. Education for Indian people, according to Cajete (1994), involves learning "through our bodies and spirits as much as through our minds" (p. 31). Aboriginal ways of knowing offer us a vision to find balance and harmony in the way we live and learn. Through story, we can examine our world not by just asking: how does it work? and what use is it? Like the old people, we can ask an additional question: what does it mean (Deloria, 1991, p. 30)?

Finding a framework to think about, and to write this thesis was a difficult part of the journey. How do I present the journey of my learning with spirituality at the centre? A friend told me not to worry because it would come to me in the next few days. Now how could someone know this? I think this is a part of the magic we feel at SUNTEP. Several days later, as I read and reread the words on the pages of Cajete's book (1994), Look to the mountain: An ecology of Indigenous education, it suddenly appeared. Well, probably not suddenly. I

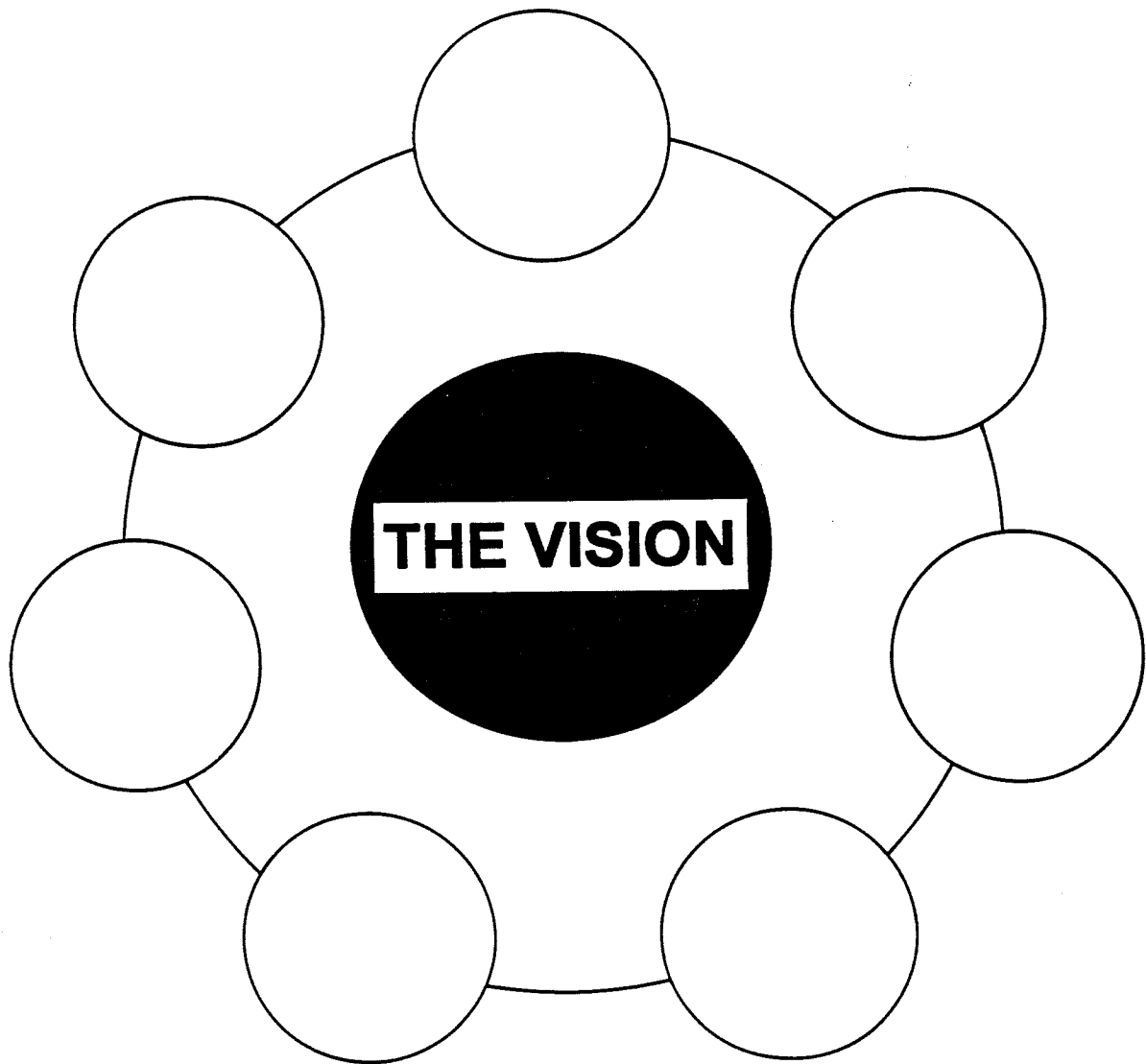
carried his book with me everywhere. Perhaps if you hold it, eventually it will all be absorbed. Not so. Anyway, I came upon "The Connected Rings of Indigenous Visioning", a figure in Cajete's book, and it all began to fit together. This visioning cycle gives me a theory within which to place my experience (which is what a theory is) with spirituality at the centre of my learning. About learning in the Aboriginal tradition, Cajete states:

in traditional Native American perspective, learning begins and ends with spirit. This learning path begins with appropriate orientation, acknowledging relationships, setting intentions, seeking, creating, understanding, sharing, and then celebrating one's vision with reference to a place of centering. ... The eighth ring is the centering place of beginning and of completions, "that place Indian People talk about". (1994, p. 69)

My journey as a teacher/learner and the journey of my students in learning to teach follows this visioning cycle. The story and the vision (Chapter's One and Nine) begin and end in the centering place "where the soul of the dream is honoured". Cajete states that "traditional learning begins and ends with the spirit" (p. 69). The visioning cycle follows this perspective. If we are to transform our present educational system and "to Indigenize contemporary Western education" (p. 68), we must take creative leaps. "We move mountains by first moving ourselves, and the way we educate makes all the difference in the world. The choice is ours" (p. 68). Spirituality is an important aspect of Indigenous education and integral to all learning. I honour this in Chapters' Two through Eight which follow the path of the connected rings: Asking, Seeking,

Making, Having, Sharing, Celebrating and Being. Cajete explains, "This learning path begins with appropriate orientation, acknowledging relationships, setting intentions, seeking, creating, understanding, sharing, and then celebrating one's vision with reference to a place of centering" (p. 69). The writing of this thesis is a spiritual and emotional journey of discovery, hope, and a search for meaning. The Connected Rings guided my path as I attempted to find my way. There are many ways of knowing and many ways of learning. As stated by Cajete, "[This] is but one of many creative possibilities" (p. 69). I borrow the metaphor "of good heart" and "of good thought" and "through this journey experience a state of wholeness" (p. 45).

The Connected Rings of Indigenous Visioning



In whatever we learn and by whatever means we learn, we are always true to our inherent nature and personality. This is why, in all that we endeavor to learn, we always learn something about ourselves. (Cajete, 1994, p. 70)

Chapter One

Dance with Me

Native American traditionalists would contend that all learning is related to the spirit. ... Many people are uncomfortable with spirituality in any aspect of modern education because of the instances of misunderstanding and misapplication of spirituality in modern society. ... As with everything in human affairs, it becomes a matter of perspective and consciousness. (Cajete, 1994, p. 73)

I am Sandra Emma Sherwin-Shields, a daughter, a sister, a wife, a mother, a friend, a teacher and a learner. I am me. My middle name, Emma, was passed on to me from my maternal grandmother, Emma Maude Spence. I remember as a child feeling ashamed of my name Emma, and now I am ashamed to admit my shame. For I know now that my spirit is Emma. I believe it has always been so, but I did not connect with this life force until my last visit with my Grandmother to wish her good-bye. As she lay sleeping in her casket, I saw and felt her dignity. I saw and felt her spirit as she continued on her journey. This was her last great gift to me. It is a mystery. Now I connect with this life force by turning inward to make meaning through my mind, my heart and my soul. The pathway of this journey begins and ends in the Centering Place

“where the soul and intention of the vision are formed” (Cajete, 1994, p. 69).

This is a spiritual journey for “in all that [I] endeavor to learn, [I] always learn something about [myself]” (p. 70).

Cajete (1994) states, “Spirituality evolves from exploring and coming to know and experience the nature of the living energy moving in each of us, through us, and around us” (p. 42). I explore the relationship I have with my inner and outer world through story. I come to know myself as I tell the story, and as I reflect on and revise the story, to make meaning. The story changes because “there is always a better way of being in the world, a more complete prediction, a more perfect expression of experience and feeling” (Huebner, 1985, p. 170). The pathway to my learning is spiritual for it allows me to explore relationships of love and caring. Spirituality allows me to have a passion for what I do.

When I think and speak of spirituality, I do not refer to religious traditions or doctrines. Spirit comes from the Latin term meaning breath and breathing. Spirit is that which gives life, and new ways of knowing through creative thinking, dreaming, and visioning, thus offering new possibilities. Spirituality is not to know but to be in a state of knowing that is always incomplete. This state allows for transformation as we participate with others in the creation of our universe (Cajete, 1994; Huebner, 1985). Spirituality is a relationship with knowing that is “a mode of being open, vulnerable, and available to the internal and external world” (Huebner, p. 170). We learn about and create who we are in relation to

our stories and the stories of others. We reflect on the past to make meaning of the present and create hope for the future. Huebner writes about hope this way:

Hope makes possible patience and peaceful waiting in the midst of turmoil and unsettledness. With openness, love, and hope, new creation is possible. Old forms can be transcended. (1985, p. 172)

Dare I be passionate about my learning? Dare I have the passion and the vision to change the world? Dare I dream and imagine "What if . . .?"

I am Sandra Emma Sherwin-Shields, a teacher and a learner in an Aboriginal teacher education program. Telling and listening to stories is an everyday occurrence in our centre. Stories are everywhere: in the classrooms, in the hallways, in the lounge. As teacher/learners and learner/teachers, we share stories to feel connected to each other. We share our experiences to make sense of our learning and to create new meanings. Finding ways to use story as a pedagogy for teaching and learning is a constant topic of our conversations because we believe our students' stories are a legitimate and important source of knowledge. Learning to teach is a lifelong process and is a deeply human endeavor. It involves much more than learning theories, strategies and skills. Learning to teach is an emotional and personal quest of discovering who we are and where we come from. Learning to teach involves the sharing of stories to create new realities by reflecting critically on past experiences and beliefs to create new visions for the future. The knowledge and

experiences the students bring to this program is the foundation of our learning.

And so we story.

Through story we explain and come to understand ourselves.
Story - in creative combination with encounters, experiences,
image making, ritual, play, imagination, dream, and modeling -
forms the basic foundation of all human learning and teaching.
(Cajete, 1994, p. 68)

We tell stories because they are healing. I was reminded of this when I shared with a friend my inner struggle to put words to paper in my uncountable attempts at writing this thesis. I told her that I am humbled to know I have no profound thoughts, but I do believe I have a strong intuitive sense about story as our source of knowing and being. She responded with, "but you have a story, a grand story". Her words were healing. There may not be a "grand theory" but perhaps we all have a "grand story"! We went on to discuss how much there is that words cannot express and also how much knowledge our stories hold if we are only willing "to learn to listen and listen to learn" (Chambers Erasmus, 1989, p. 275). My friend recalled a story I had previously shared with her about my son.

My son, about five years old at the time, was very angry with me. I can't remember the circumstances, but I remember his words very clearly, "I hate you, (pause), but I mean it in the nicest possible way".

My friend said this is one story she will never forget and stated how we often hear the words "I mean this in the nicest possible way" echoed by others in

our centre. This short story is healing in many ways. First, it made me laugh when my son said it, and, it has made others laugh when I told them the story. Laughter is healing. In our centre, laughter is everywhere: in the classrooms, in the hallways, in the lounge . . . in the telling and retelling of stories.

This story is healing because it made me realize my son is a very sensitive person. On the surface he said something quite horrible. But this young child knew that he had to repair the relationship he had betrayed. He reflected very quickly and took action to right a wrong. I learned a lot about my son in those few words. I could go on discussing the knowledge and the learning that occurred because stories are like that . . . if we are open, vulnerable and available (Huebner, 1985).

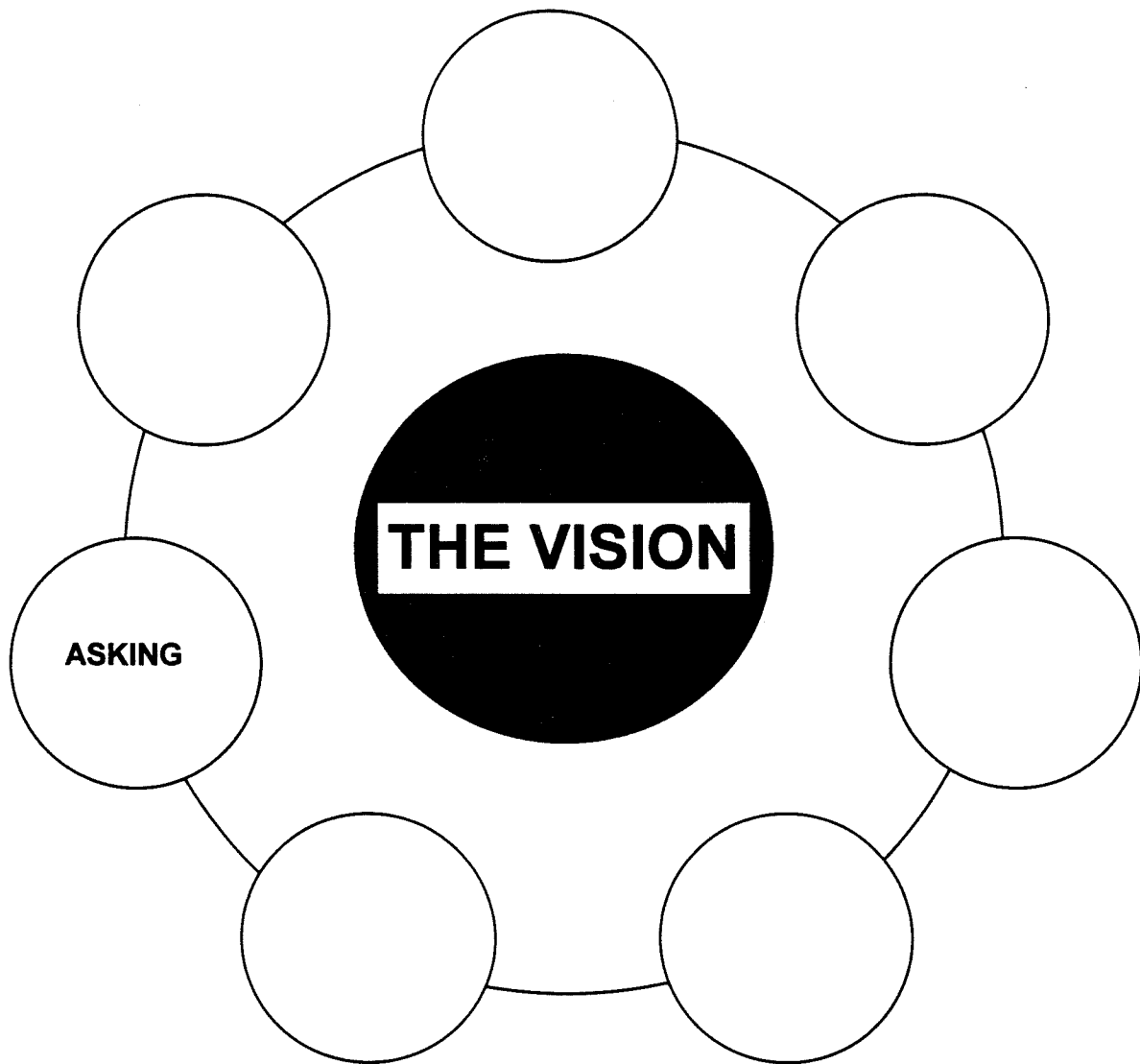
We all live storied lives and through story we structure and make sense of how we experience the world. Our stories tell us who we are, where we come from and where we are going. Our stories capture the meaning we make as we construct and reconstruct our reality. Story is the method and phenomenon of this research as I story to understand the meaning I make of my experiences as a teacher and a learner, and as I restory the stories of my students in their search for the meaning of teaching and learning.

The Cree word, *Mamatowisowin*, speaks of "a capacity to access the creative force of the inner space with the use of all our faculties that constitute our being. It is to exercise inwardness" (Ermine, 1994, p. 5). Ermine states that "this inner space is that universe of being within each person that is synonymous

with the soul, the spirit, the self, or the being" (p. 4). Any understanding of the universe begins from subjective knowledge and then extends itself "out into the external world" (p. 11).

Emma, she and me. I turn inward to dream and imagine ways to honour the soul and spirit of my students. I try to envision better ways to listen and to learn from the voices and the stories of my students so that I might be a better person and a better teacher. My Grandmother gave me a gift, a story of dignity. She taught me to listen with my heart and my mind. It is my only way of knowing. I invite you on this journey to join our worlds of thought and feeling so that we might become involved together in a "dance of meaning" (Cajete, 1994, p. 132).

The Connected Rings of Indigenous Visioning



Asking is the initiation of a creative flow of thought. It is the place of first insights, intuitions, encounters, and experiences. The activities of Asking are like tilling the soil, planting the seed, and then saying to the spirits of the world, "I have planted my most precious seed, help it to grow, give it life". (Cajete, 1994, p. 70)

Chapter Two

Listen for the Music

Stories go in circles. They don't go in straight lines. So it helps if you listen in circles because there are stories inside stories and stories between stories and finding your way through them is as easy and hard as finding your way home. And part of the finding is the getting lost. If you're lost, you really start to look around and listen. (Metzger in Brody, Witherell, Donald & Lundblad, 1991, p. 257)

I am Sandy, a non-Aboriginal teacher in an Aboriginal teacher education program. I have been an instructor in this program both part-time and full-time for the past fifteen years. For eight years prior to this, I was a primary grade teacher in schools where all the children were of Aboriginal ancestry. As a non-Aboriginal teacher, it was, and is, essential that I constantly reflect upon my perspectives and understandings of teaching and learning in order that I not impose my beliefs, values and attitudes on my students. I must critically examine the motives for everything I do. I must understand and know who I am as a person, a teacher and a learner so that my relationship with my students is always one of trust and honesty. I must reflect upon my own personal history to understand how my past experiences influence the decisions and actions I make

as a teacher. Cajete (1994) explains such a personal journey this way:

Every journey involving one's whole being begins with asking for illumination. Asking names the quest and sets forth its essential goal. This goal focuses intention for seeking something one's inner being truly desires. True learning results from deep motivation, the desire to obtain something for which one cares deeply, down to the bones, with one's whole heart and soul. ... What one learns in this first ring is all relative to the vision one is seeking. ... Knowing how to ask and prepare for knowledge is a special kind of orientation. Learning necessary skills, discipline, focus, and how to walk a path are all a part of learning about one's own character, one's face. (p. 70)

As a pedagogy for teaching, I search for ways to allow individual uniqueness but I also search for the human qualities that are universal. My philosophy begins with the belief that all human beings have a universal need to be loved and cared for. I have come to believe that the most important concept in education is relationship: to self, to others, to our community and to our world. And at the heart of relationship is spirituality, which involves learning "through our bodies and spirits as much as through our minds" (Cajete, 1994, p. 31).

Story has been at the heart of my teaching ever since my first grade-one class in a northern Saskatchewan community. Through stories the children brought their language, culture and ways of knowing into the classroom. Through stories, we built relationships. I struggled to make learning meaningful for my students. I did not always have the knowledge or the confidence to trust my intuition that these stories must be the foundation of our learning, but I learned a lot in those early teaching years because I was open, vulnerable, available, in relationship, and willing to participate in the act of creating with my

students. But I also made many mistakes. Learning to teach is often messy and agonizing. The process is long and hard, and now it connects with my journey as an instructor in an Aboriginal teacher education program.

The course I presently teach is a pre-internship class for students in their third year of studies. As the students go through this four-year program, one of their greatest fears is interning - their sixteen-week school placement. My course prepares students for internship and helps give them confidence to believe in themselves as teachers. As pre-interns, the students focus on methods, strategies and skills of becoming effective teachers but we do not separate this learning process from who we are as human beings. Learning to teach is a personal and emotional journey, a discovery of self, and thus we are, at every moment, immersed in reflecting on, constructing and reconstructing: our perspectives, our philosophies, our beliefs, our visions, and our hopes for the future. We are immersed in story because "to remember is a way to re-know and reclaim a part of [our] life" (Cajete, 1994, p. 169). We need to know who we are in order to know what we want to be.

Learning to teach is very complex. In planning my course, the most difficult question I ask myself is, Where do we begin? How do we dialogue and continue to learn about the complexity of teaching? How do we talk about lesson planning without talking about presenting skills? How do we talk about classroom management without connecting it to planning and presenting? How do we know which strategies, methods, and skills to focus on? How do we if . . .

if . . . if? The questions, the choices and the decisions go on and on. How do my pre-interns make choices and decisions about everything they will do as teachers? How do we look at teaching in a way that is whole and still learn about all the parts? How do we make meaning of the complexity of learning to teach?

We make choices according to our beliefs and it is my belief that story is a valuable and important source of knowledge, knowing and meaning making. We cannot separate what we know from who we are. Bruner (1985; 1986) contrasts a paradigmatic mode of knowing with a narrative mode of knowing and states that "they differ radically in their procedures for establishing truth. One verifies by appeal to formal verification procedures and empirical truth. The other establishes not truth but truth-likeness or verisimilitude" (p. 97). Paradigmatic knowing is "context free and universal", and narrative knowing is "context sensitive and particular" (1985, p. 97). Rather than to know the "truth", narrative makes meaning of the experience. Polkinghorne (1988) discusses narrative as the foundation of self and as a framework for understanding past events and planning future actions. Narrative, according to Polkinghorne, is a cognitive process that organizes human experience and the means by which human existence is made meaningful. Narrative is an activity and the expression of growth. Polkinghorne (1988) writes:

We achieve our present identities and self concept through the use of ... narrative configurations, and make our existence into a whole by understanding it as an expression of a single

unfolding and developing story. We are in the middle of our stories and cannot be sure how they will end; we are constantly having to revise the plot as new events are added to our lives. Self, then, is not a static thing nor a substance, but a configuring of personal events into a historical unity which includes not only what has been but also anticipation of what will be. (p. 150)

Witherell (1991) also suggests that narrative is the core of the foundation of self and that self is formed and given meaning in the context of its relations with others, "self-in-relation". One comes to know self through dialogue (story). Self is constructed and reconstructed as one forms personal visions in relation to another's visions. Witherell writes, "story and metaphor ... enable us to 'leap into the other' ... imagining the experience and the feeling of others" (p. 94).

On life story, Miller, Cassie & Drake (1990) suggest that stories help us understand our lives:

In the search for meaning and purpose it is important not to overlook how people make meaning of specific events in their lives. We tend to interpret our lives through the stories we tell. Our life story is our way of knowing who we are; it is our identity (McAdams, 1985). Our interpretation is temporal; it connects the past, perceived present, and the anticipated future. (p. 25)

Story allows us to tell about our experiences, to imagine and wonder "what if?" and to ask, "what is the meaning?"

Writing a teaching autobiography is one way my students and I use story as part of the experience of learning to teach. This is our way of looking at teaching as a unified whole rather than in fragmented parts. As my students write and tell stories in their teaching autobiographies, they reflect on the

experiences, events and people who have influenced their decisions to be a teacher and they write about the perspective on teaching and learning they have gained from their past and present experiences and their visions for the future. In their autobiographies, the pre-interns reflect on each week of field experience and tell stories of their evolving self images as teachers. This assignment is our way to create something that is new and hopeful. It is our ongoing production and construction of knowledge. The writing of the teaching autobiography is an ongoing process of developing perceptions and beliefs about what it means to be a teacher. It is deeply personal and emotional. As their teacher, I am humbled every time they hand their autobiographies in to me. My students teach me a lot about what it means to be a teacher.

The decision to use my students' teaching autobiographies as the topic of my research and thesis work has come after a deep inner struggle. I have questioned my motives and the possible effects of this research on my teaching and relationship with my students. When I discussed these concerns with my class, they pointed out that I cannot separate the person from the teacher. It is, as they say, who I am. The themes and issues that emerge from their stories have been a great source of learning for me so it is with the greatest honour and respect that I have asked nine of my students to make their work a part of my work, as a teacher and a learner in the writing of this thesis.

The participants in this study are six Metis women and three First nations women. Two of the women are single with no dependents, seven of the women

have children. They range in age from twenty-one to thirty-eight years. Six of the women have completed the pre-internship year and the four-month internship. As this report is being written, they are completing their final semester in the program. The other three participants are presently in my pre-intern class. Storytelling, oral and written, offers my students the opportunity to be the authors and the meaning makers of their life stories. (A brief introduction to the nine participants in this study and their responses to the completed story can be found in Appendix B.)

The stories (the data) that I have used in the writing of this thesis were collected from the teaching autobiographies of my nine participants. These stories include four chapters written when the participants were pre-interns and a final chapter written upon completion of the four-month internship. Also included in the data are stories collected during a storytelling session with the interns during their third month of interning. This session was audio taped and transcribed into written form. I invited the interns to have this storytelling session because "story, expressed through experience ... is an essential vehicle of Indigenous learning" (Cajete, 1994, p. 30). This session was also an opportunity for the interns to reconnect with the SUNTEP community, "the place for feeling and being connected" (p. 165). It was an opportunity for the interns to explore further, through story, their evolving images of themselves as teachers. This storytelling session also models a process the pre-interns experience after each week of field experience. Through dialogue and story, through reflection,

writing and silence, we revisit past and present experiences and construct new stories for the future.

The teaching autobiography connects personal history and stories of experience as a way of making choices and decisions about the strategies, methods and skills the pre-interns will need as teachers - choices and decisions that are grounded in their philosophy of the meaning of teaching and learning. I invite you to interpret their stories and make meaning for your own situation. Stories are like that, you know.

This thesis is also my story of learning. I began the course work as a graduate student with two passions. First, I wanted ownership for my learning and I wanted my learning to be meaningful. I knew that I could not place my learning outside of myself and that my learning is always deeply emotional. I cannot separate my thoughts from my feelings. I also knew that this passion does not easily fit within the traditional milieu of academic scholarship, which places knowledge and learning objectively outside of ourselves. Emotion, according to some, only gets in the way of learning. Without words to articulate the reasons for my passion, I was determined to do it my way. I was determined to trust my intuition.

My second passion was story. Again, it was my intuition that led me to believe that I must honour the dignity of my students by allowing their stories to be the source of our learning. But I wanted to know more about story, and when you pay attention to something, you soon find it is everywhere. As I began my

search to understand story as a way of knowing, experiencing and being, I found story everywhere . . . in conversation, in the news, in literature.

I traveled many different paths in my quest to understand how it is that "story is a primary structure through which humans think, relate, and communicate" (Cajete, 1994, p. 116) and how it is that "we might be disposed to take stories much more seriously if we perceived them first and foremost as a product of the predisposition of the human mind" (Rosen, 1985, p. 12). The more I searched, the more complicated was the story of story. I was often left wondering, "what does this have to do with story?" and "why can't it give me a topic, a focus, for my thesis?" As I struggled to make sense of story and meaning, I often felt like I was losing my way. Stories are like that.

Learning is never easy but I began to realize my two passions are one. If I am to trust my intuition and let it be my guide, I must listen very hard to see. And I must allow my imagination to open up the possibilities. With intuition and imagination as my guide, I listen for the music that will lead me from darkness into light (Jagla, 1992). Witherell and Noddings (1991) have helped me to understand story as a feminist view of research:

Stories can join the worlds of thought and feeling, and they give a special voice to the feminine side of human experience - to the power of emotion, intuition, and relationships in human lives. ... Through the poignant grip of story and metaphor we meet ourselves and other in our mutual quest for goodness and meaning. (p. 4)

My passion to make my learning meaningful now weaves together my

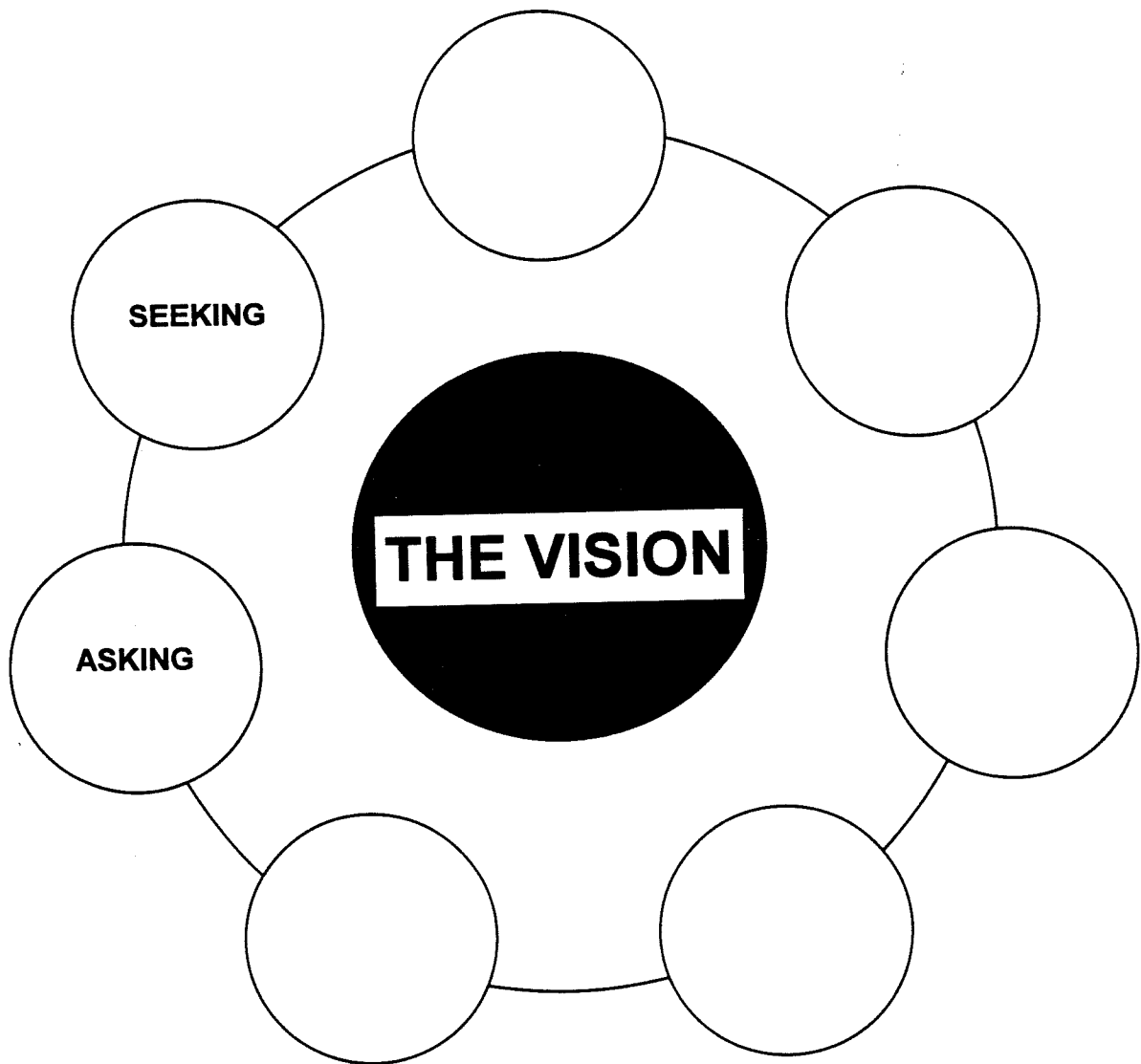
story with the stories of my students as we learn together the meaning in learning to teach. We talk, share, reflect, tell and retell our stories to relive our experiences in order to know.

My goal as a teacher is to further understand and make meaning of the themes and issues my students present in their teaching autobiographies. How do their stories deepen their understanding, and mine, of what it means to learn to teach? My goal as a teacher is to learn ways of creating and providing an environment of trust and respect which allows for the telling of stories that are deeply personal and often full of risk. Does this, then, also speak of the importance of relationship? These are my questions as I continue on the journey. About this first ring along the path I walk to the center, Cajete (1994) states:

Asking is prayer, and is the first ring of the path. ... The activities of Asking are ... tasks that are simple yet complex, hard yet liquid, inward in feeling yet outward in expression - all rolled into one. They are all tasks that are essential for gaining a sense of direction, for orienting to one's center. It is asking for life and being awakened to the life of our own soul. (p. 70)

I remember my grandmother's story and search inside myself each step of the way. Inside, with my inner voice, I listen for the music.

The Connected Rings of Indigenous Visioning



Seeking is always about searching for the authentic, the basics, the meanings of life. In the process of seeking we learn to search not only for ourselves, but for all people. We learn the lessons of care, self-sacrifice, and humility. (Cajete, 1994, p. 72)

Chapter Three

Finding a Special Song

We have to facilitate our children and ourselves in that ancient journey to find our face (to understand and appreciate our true character), to find our heart (to understand and appreciate the passions that move and energize our life), to find a foundation (work that allows us to fully express our potential and our greatest fulfillment), and to become a complete man or woman (to find our Life and appreciate the spirit that moves us). (Cajete, 1994, p.68)

In Chapter One of the teaching autobiography, the pre-interns reflect and write about the experiences, people and events in their lives that have influenced the people they are today and the attitudes, beliefs and values that form their personal philosophy of what it means to teach. The following story, Finding a Special Song, weaves together the voices (the stories) of my nine participants as written in Chapter One of their teaching autobiography. I selected the data (from their stories) and created the collective narrative as an example of the meaning the pre-interns make of their experiences as a part of learning to teach. This story and my reflections are an example of my meaning-making strategy in learning to teach that connects the mind and the heart. Cajete (1994) states:

Seeking is the actual process of questing. It is looking for what we mysteriously yearn for, that part of ourselves that we need, and it is missing. ... seeking is always about searching for the authentic, the basics, the meanings of life. In the process of seeking we learn to search not only for ourselves, but for all people. We learn the lessons of care, self-sacrifice, and humility. (p. 71-72)

The voices of my nine students weave in and out of the following collective narrative. They are all individuals with different backgrounds and experiences. They each have separate stories and, like most humans, have very complicated lives. The collective narrative is an example of the knowledge I gain when I receive and reflect upon their stories of experience. The collective narrative represents community knowledge as it is gained and shared with others. As teachers and learners this story is our beginning.

Finding a Special Song: The Collective Narrative

If our goal as educators is to help our students travel on the path they are meant to travel and become the people they are meant to be, then we must work to be the people we are meant to be. Becoming the person you are meant to be and in essence the teacher you are meant to be involves embarking on a profound journey. By "making explicit those attitudes, sentiments and values that form part" (Manely-Casimir & Wasserman, p. 290) of who we are and reflecting on our experiences, thoughts and feelings we travel on a journey to self-awareness.

One of the most challenging and difficult tasks any person can undertake is to analyze her core. It takes great courage to look at oneself realistically and share these realities.

There was a time when self-destruction seemed natural and normal to me. A time when I had lost so much of who I was that life seemed too difficult to live. I could find no meaning in life, and when life has no meaning it is almost impossible to continue your journey. To survive I had to not only bring meaning to my life, but also find in myself a person that I could love and be proud of - and I did it! That is "the person I know I am".

To say that "the person I know I am" is someone I can love and be proud of all the time would be an exaggeration. I am not perfect and to demand perfection would be self-destructive. I do not believe we reach a place where we say "yes I am completely evolved, I am the perfect person". However, I do demand that I continually strive to be someone I can respect. This fact makes defining the person you are of considerable importance because it is impossible to move forward if you do not understand where you are moving from.

As a student teacher I have often wondered why it is I want to become a teacher. I have my personal philosophy as to what kind of teacher I would want to be but never really explored the origin of these beliefs. As I looked back upon experiences surrounding my education in

and out of the system I began to realize where my beliefs were rooted. It is through analysis and reflection of past experiences that a person can truly understand the person they were, the person they are and the person they wish to become.

My life story is unique only to myself. Similar or same experiences may happen to another individual but it is my interpretation of these that mold who I am. I want to become a good teacher. To me this is striving to do my best in a professional field which has lifelong effects on the people I interact with. In order to determine what my best will be I have gone back and reviewed some personal experiences which have influenced me into becoming the person I am today.

Growing up for me was a triumph. My own parents divorced due to alcohol problems, and moving became second nature to me. I realize today that the reason for moving was that my mother could not face her problems. Instead she packed and we were gone again.

Welfare was the income supplier for most of my young life, but living off the system made me feel like a vagabond. For example, I felt inferior in school because I didn't have quality (trendy) clothing, school supplies and whatever else goes with the image.

At times it was tough going, and at these times we would always go "home" (for a lack of a better word) to the farm, or I would stay with other aunts and uncles for the summer. During my visits I spent a lot of time by

myself, since I was the youngest of the cousins. I remember walking around the farm for hours with three companions - two cows and a dog that were with me for almost every summer between the ages of 6 and 10. I would pack a lunch for myself, along with wild berries, and carry a pail of oats and a bone for the dog. The three of us would set out on our journey. No one ever worried about me because I had the dog, and if they wanted me back at a certain time, someone would send a watch with me or honk the car horn.

I enjoyed these times the best. My animal friends and I would talk and I would daydream about our fantasy lives. Or I would talk about my family and feel sorry for them. Sometimes I would pretend we were rich and the woods was our castle full of wonderful treasures. Today I know how rich I really was because I have learned many valuable lessons since then and I am still alive with imagination.

My dad had high regard for the educational system. He felt it was one of the most important factors of life. If you get your education you can do anything you want. Doors open for you. This he probably learned from his own experience. He only had a grade six education and he worked hard all his life. He provided well for his family and prided himself in supplying modern conveniences. He wanted a better life for his children.

My mom was a great teacher when it came to doing what was right

and what was wrong. I learned how to care for and love other people because my mom always said, "People come first!" She worked in a hospital, so that was her philosophy about people. My mom was very open with me at a young age, she told me many stories of her past and showed her emotions with no hesitation. And whatever mom said, it was significant in my life; her stories had so much meaning. My mom and her teachings of how to love and care, they were my teachers.

My mother also held this high regard towards the educational system. She made my dad promise to see myself and my younger sister through high school, to at least get our grade twelve. This he did although neither of us made it easy for him. My mother went to upgrading when I was in grade eight and completed her grade twelve. She died three years later. She also worked hard all her life and wanted only the best for us.

We were raised 'independent'. We were not expected to get married unless we were able to provide for ourselves. My parents were equal partners and there was no "housewife" or "man of the house". I believe this had a great impact on my thinking and attitude toward life and school. My parents were indeed great teachers.

Even from a distance he (my dad) was there to support me whether it be a pep talk on the phone or making sure my car was running properly. When he was sick in the hospital he worried about my missing school. School was most important to him. This is what kept me going

throughout the last twelve months. Keeping focus on my goal - my dad's goal. I do not want to let him down by letting myself down and settling for less than I deserve. I feel as a teacher I can also give this kind of encouragement. Expecting the best from each student and encouraging them to expect the best from themselves. Instill in them the pride of not giving up on themselves.

My major learning experiences were the summers we spent at the trapline or at camp across the lake. This is where I learned about who I was and where I belonged. What I cherish and learned a lot from was the walks out on the trapline that I took with my grandmother. On these walks we would spend hours walking and checking on rabbit snares. We would do this every day, sometimes twice a day. This is when my grandmother would tell me about her life, what was expected of her, how she lived and how she came to be where she is today. Then she would tell me what was expected of me and why. She would tell me all about being a woman and looking after myself, what was expected from me when I grew up and had children of my own. This was a time when everything was, and still is today, sacred. It was a time of learning and living.

I learned humility through many things and over the years it has been reinforced by the children I gave birth to. One of the memories that stand out about learning humility is when I was about twelve years old. I used to go for walks by myself and I would end up at the lake. I

remember sitting down on the beach with trees half surrounding me and I was looking across the lake. It was calm and the sun was setting. I was left in awe of nature and at the life the creator has given me. I was just a small speck on the face of this earth.

My first memories of school start at a very early age. I remember going to kindergarten. I remember that my teacher was very nice to me and we were always playing games and having fun. Nothing specific really happened until my sister and I were placed in a foster home for one year and had to go to school in []. I remember being scared because of everything being new and the only person that I knew was my sister. The reason I think I remember so much as a child and about school is because so many traumatic experiences happened to me when I was young. I always remember school as being a safe place for me, the teachers were very nice and treated me with more care and attention because of my situation. I hated foster care, the other kids were so mean, but I guess I can't blame them because they were all in the same situation as I was. Once my sister and I were moved back to Prince Albert with our parents I felt safe again.

It's funny the things that I remember because I specifically remember the year changing to 1980. I was in grade two and sitting in my desk. I remember the teacher announcing that it was now 1980 and to remember to write that down in our books. I was so happy because I

thought to myself, great, another new year; maybe things will get better.

I remember all of my school teachers. This shows just how great an impact teachers have on a student's life. I remember in grade three my teacher's name was Mrs. G. I had a late library book. She asked me in front of the class whether or not I had it with me or if I lost it. I cried for I thought I was in trouble. I was scared. She should/could have talked to me privately later and mentioned that it was not such a big deal and that it was okay. She never did this and I continued to be my withdrawn self, scared of the authority figure called "teacher".

Children are our future. We need to understand the feelings and moods of our students. An empathetic teacher should demonstrate sincere, genuine, open feelings before reaching out and meeting the needs of anyone. I want to be the kind of teacher who is sensitive to student's needs and can give attention to those who may need it. Teachers should not be taught attitudes or how to behave. It should already be in them to express moral values such as sharing, caring, respect, understanding and humility towards their students and peers. To have effective teaching and learning, I think it is important to direct much attention towards the healthy growth of students as persons. Understand students' reactions starting from the inside and be aware of how the process of learning is experienced by the students. If the teacher can develop communication and a relationship with the students, then they are

better able to deal with conflicts or certain behaviors such as racism or indifferences. I think that being a teacher is a special gift because you are helping and caring for the well-being of children.

Grade school to me was something I had no control over but had to be a part of. I never asked questions as to why I had to attend or why school even existed. I was quiet and shy, never spoke up much even if I knew the right answer. I never had too much interaction with the teachers. I feel this affected me in a way where I never received much positive feedback, at least not orally. I seldom heard the words "Good answer" or "Nice try". Sure the teachers called on me but not always when I knew the right answer.

I feel it's important to give all students positive reinforcement throughout the day or week. All should feel valuable, intelligent and capable. A teacher can give a smile to the shy students, a pat on the back to aggressive students and positive feedback to the outspoken. These are simple examples. Teachers are in an excellent position to build self confidence and self esteem within students.

Of all my school experiences I seem to recall the negative ones most clearly. The negative experiences and the pain that goes with them is as real today as it was then; but now I understand why I felt the way I did. By remembering and reflecting on those experiences I learn to deal with the pain and eventually lead to heal myself. I know I will find the

process helpful because in the teaching field I may come across a child or many children who are going through some of the same experiences that I went through as a child. I know in my heart that I will be able to relate to them and appreciate their feelings, fears, and concerns.

My memories are not all horrifying. My mind contains a mixture of happy and good experiences but the negative memories create the questioning and confusion within oneself. When something good happens you do not often wonder "I wonder why that nice thing happened to me?" but when something awful happens to you, you are often confused and look for some sort of reasoning or explanation.

The bad memories are like an infectious wound in your skin. Just when you think its starting to heal it gets infected again. The layer of skin that has scabbed over is violently torn off, leaving the wound vulnerable and open for all to see. Soon that wound does not heal at all but is raw and red. The only way to protect it is to stay away from everyone. You become numb to the pain because you ignore the sore. Because you ignore it, it can never heal. It remains raw.

Although I know now that dealing with my problems is the only healthy solution, I did not know that then. I just ignored my feelings and grew numb from the pain. I was withdrawn and terribly shy. I went to school and if nobody called me the "I" word (Indian) then it was a good day. If I did not have to speak at school then it was a good day. School

was a place I feared, yet like most kids I loved to learn, play, and have fun.

I realize that learning is an on-going life experience, in an ever changing environment. Life, school and educators in the 1970s were much different than they are now. When I was in grades four and five, I faced much racism. As a Native child, learning and growing up in a white school with a few other Native children, I was a shy, intimidated child, with low self-esteem. The teachers and principal in the school I went to did not promote much equality or concern for the visible minority. Certain students avoided being near the Native students and would say things like, "Yew, Indian", "Scabie-head", "Dumb-Inyun" (There was a shopping store called Dominion), and other names.

I remember...

We are playing at recess. We play - the boys catch the girls and then kiss them. All the boys try and catch my friend. I run beside her but no one ever catches me. The bell rings and it is time to line up at the door. We have to line up single file in front of the big steel doors before the supervising teacher will admit us inside. We all run to get near the front of the line. In grade four everyone wants to be at the front of the line because it means that you are cool. I step behind my friend, as I always did for the past 4 years (we were best friends ever since Kindergarten). The big boy, who is very cute, popular, and has the biggest crush on my

friend pushes me out of line. Without saying a word I glare up at him with my black/brown eyes. I stare into his ice cold blue mirror-like eyes. Then he says it, he says the "I" word. "Indians belong at the back of the line", he commands this statement loudly and directly to me. My heart sinks to the bottom of my stomach. I feel like I am going to throw-up. The word repeats in my mind a thousand times over and over again. "Indian, Indian, Indian, Indian, Indian, Indian..."

I look at my friend. She is laughing, the five girls, and boys are laughing. In fact I think the whole school is laughing. The supervising teacher just calmly glares into the empty school grounds as though she is deaf. Has she not seen what has happened? Does she not care? I gasp desperately for some logical answer to why she has ignored the incident. I pick up my heart and drag my body to the back of the thirty mile line up. I keep my shameful head down only looking at the hundreds of pairs of laughing shoes. I reach the back of the line and lift my head up a touch. I look at the dark and black haired kids in front of me. Their faces are not dirty, they are all fully dressed, and they did not smell funny. They are just kids. Kids just like me.

Sand is made up of millions of pebbles and tiny tiny rocks. All of them are unique and special in their shape, color, and texture. The pebbles and rocks blend into what we think of as sand. The only pebbles we usually stop and notice are the shiny or special ones. Who determines

which ones are special and deserve to be admired and which ones deserve to be unnoticed, ignored, or walked on?

By comparing a classroom to sand, I can understand the importance of the student body (represented by "sand") as a whole unit working together to create the personality of the group, and the importance of recognizing each individual student (the pebbles) as important, unique and special contributors that make up the whole group (sand). The classroom should be the place (just like the sand) that encourages cooperation and harmony within the group while at the same time recognizing that each person (pebble) is important and is needed.

When I think about what kind of teacher I will be, I think about my personality. I am a very caring person. I care about people and like to demonstrate my feelings towards them. Caring about students is very important in the classroom but displaying and telling the students that you care is equally important. I will care about the students the same way I care about my child, with sincerity, warmth, kindness, and understanding.

As strange as it may seem I cannot look back over my teachers and find someone who I want to be like. My schooling was somewhat of a benign experience. I encountered poor teachers, but none who were horrific. The tragic thing is that I did not encounter one master teacher. That is precisely "the teacher I want to be".

I believe a master teacher has the ability to help her students see

that each one of them is terribly important to this world and to her. I would hope that my students come to see themselves as having the potential to do and be anything. "The teacher I want to be" would not only ensure that her students are both literate and numerate, but would also help them to find the tools which will allow them to live productive, creative, passionate lives.

As an educator, it is my responsibility in affirming wholeness and dispersing the well-being to all humanity, not just my students. Healing is an essential part of life and teaching. I remember how an Elder emphasized the importance of healing. She introduced the seven ways of healing oneself through crying, shaking, sweating, throwing up, yelling, laughing and singing. She said that each individual may experience one or more of these forms of healing whether in a sweat lodge or sometime in their life. I believe this is true because a teacher carries so many roles and needs to work on inner healing before reaching out to help someone else. Through the morals, values and wisdom instilled in me as a person, I am able to analyze and exercise control over my own life and environment so that I can be more effective as an educator. I knew that I had to put aside the negative experiences of racism that I faced in my elementary years at school and learn to be kind and respectful towards the white people.

From the teachers I had throughout my elementary education, I

learned that it is important to be empathetic, compassionate and understanding in regard to students thoughts, ideas and emotions. It is also important to allow students the freedom to express themselves in a variety of ways: physically, mentally, artistically. It is the responsibility of the teacher to offer opportunities for students to demonstrate their strengths whenever and wherever possible.

From my junior and high school experience, as well as living with my teenagers at home, I have learned that adolescents need and want definite boundaries, realistic expectations, and to be treated with respect and dignity. Adolescents do not need to be ridiculed and 'put-down' when they are already having a difficult time defining their own identity. What these young adults need from all parents and teachers is support, acceptance, and, if necessary, tolerance. We don't always like or agree with what our teenagers wear, how they wear their hair, how they act, or the language they use, but it is their journey of discovery. This philosophy can be extended to elementary-aged students, as well as adult learners. Respect, understanding, compassion, and empathy are desirable human qualities as we all relate on a daily basis with each other. Students of every age deserve these qualities from their teacher, who can have a significant influence on students.

The family setting at SUNTEP, the instructors, and the program is giving me more than an education; it has given me the strength and

encouragement to know and accept myself, and to accept others. With all that, I will go out into the teaching profession and give back to the students what has been given to me. SUNTEP has helped me find myself, and build my identity of which I lacked for many, many years. Even when I graduate I will always remember SUNTEP and the instructors have given me confidence, hope, family, and a place I consider like home. I know now that I am not isolated, in fact I am an important member of a group, the SUNTEP family. I have confidence and know that I am working towards my identity and personal growth. I know that I am not white and I know that I am not Indian. I do know that what I am is Metis. I am proud to be Metis, because I am proud to be me.

I am now in third year in the month of October. My journey here at SUNTEP is half over and getting close to the end. I will soon embark in my journey of a different sort, my journey of pre-internship. I have entwined all my learning and past experiences into my own personal teaching philosophy. I am nervous about my pre-internship coming in November, but at the same time I am looking forward to it. I am eager to take my philosophy and put it into the actual teaching practice.

In the life of a teacher, there are many decisions that must be made on a constant basis. Decisions in regard to seating plans, scheduling of classes, content of lessons, behavior management techniques, teaching strategies/models to be used, and numerous others.

For me, this is one of the scariest aspects of teaching. At this point in time, I do not feel that I am ready to make all these decisions that affect so many people. I am definitely still in the learning process, and am not sure that a teacher who really enjoys what they do ever stops learning, searching for answers, and reflecting on decisions made.

I know that this teaching experience will unlock a world of new experiences and stories to draw from. I know now that learning is life long, a life long journey of discovery and reflection. I stand ready to embark on another chapter of my journey of self, learning, and teaching.

Finding a Special Song - My Reflections

Our lives are like our stories, they are forever evolving and informing us. (Legare, 1996, p. 59)

As the instructor of the pre-intern class, one of my beliefs is that if I expect my students to take risks, I must expect the same of myself. This means opening up my heart and speaking from my soul - the centre that holds my experiences and gives meaningfulness to my life. Within my soul, I find the stories that form and inform me. I find my stories of experience that form my knowledge and my knowing.

I search for the experiences, events and people in my life that have formed my perspective and philosophy of teaching and learning. I search for the

stories that tell me who I am as a person, a learner and a teacher. I listen for the meaning in the stories of my pre-interns as they search for their perspective and philosophy, and the stories that inform them about who they are as a person, a learner and a teacher. Only then can I make decisions about the things I do and say as a teacher/learner and a learner/teacher in an Aboriginal teacher education program.

I begin by asking myself why I have such a passion for story. What does story have to do with teaching and learning? As a child, I rarely had time to sit and listen to a story. I had little time for reading. I think as a child today, I might be diagnosed as A.D.H.D. (attention deficit hyperactive disorder)! It wasn't that I couldn't listen or that I couldn't sit still, I just never wanted to. I was alive with imagination, curiosity and activity. My mother was always shocked when my teachers would tell her how quiet I was in school. This certainly wasn't the child she knew. But there is the paradox! I was incredibly shy and incredibly talkative at the same time. Not a good combination for a child in school. My first image of wanting to be a teacher occurred in grade one when I was sent to the corner for talking. I thought to myself, "I am going to be a teacher and I will never humiliate a child like this". Did I actually think this at the time? Could such a young child articulate such a thought? Not likely, but this has become a part of my myth, my story.

As I reflect on this story, I realize how it informed me as a grade-one teacher. I knew, intuitively, that the child I saw in the classroom was not always

the same child outside those four walls. The child that was the most disruptive (and sometimes the most annoying) was often the one who held my hand and told me stories as we walked down the road to the river or as we ran about the school grounds. I made a point of spending time outside in an environment my young students knew well. Outside with nature, my students had a great deal of knowledge to share with me. Through these experiences we formed a relationship that carried us through those "disruptive" moments. Out in the natural world we allowed ourselves to be interconnected, to be human and to know each other on the inside. I believe there is a paradox amongst all of us. To be capable of caring for our students we need to know them as unique and special individuals with motives, real concerns, real feelings and with real experiences and knowledge of their own.

My teacher preparation consisted of a two-year course, one year of academics and one year of methodology. I was very young! And so, without much theory and little experience as a beginning teacher, I allowed my intuition and imagination to guide me down the path. My students were from a culture different than mine, and I had a lot to learn. Talk would be a very important part of our learning. I mean the kind of talk in which the students shared stories that connected them to their family, their community and their culture. The stories of my grade-one students became the focus of our Language Arts program and an integral part of all that we did. I remember thinking, "If I don't teach them anything at all, please don't let me hurt them. Let me keep their curiosity and

imaginations alive”.

A few years ago, long after my own children were past the storybook stage, I remembered my love for Peter Rabbit. Almost suddenly it seemed, my family was giving me all kinds of rabbit gifts (books, stuffed rabbits, Beatrice Potter collectable items . . .). I wondered where all of this was coming from? And then I remembered Peter Rabbit and Mr. McGregor's Garden was one of my favorite childhood stories. I don't remember my parents reading to me often, but I feel this warm sense of love curled up in a chair with my dad reading to me. I think it is the moment I remember as much as the story. (Perhaps this mischievous little rabbit reminds me of a mischievous little child!) I remember other childhood favorites of this child who never had time to listen or to read a story. The main characters were often in some kind of trouble. Hmmm . . .

I loved to read to my own children; it was a bedtime ritual. And I read to my grade-one students at least three times a day: because they loved storytime, because I thought it was important for children learning to read and because sometimes it was the only way to calm them down! My intuition told me it was the right thing to do. I read for my professional development as a teacher but I still don't spend much time reading for leisure. I can't seem to slow my brain down enough. There's always a story playing in my head (sometimes it's more like a hurricane going through). I think this is why I like to spend time alone, sitting in silence. I need this time to connect with my soul, to listen to the stories that inform me about who I am and where I am going. Silence gives me the time

to dream, to imagine and to form visions for my future. Silence connects me to my stories, an important way of remembering and knowing who I am. I think as teachers, we must allow our students times of silence so that they can connect with their voices and their stories, to dream, to imagine, to remember and to plan for their learning in meaningful ways. Much of what we teach can be without words. Through silence we learn humility.

I remember that my parents treated all their five children as unique individuals. Never was there pressure to be like somebody else. Rather, they encouraged us to do our best and be the best we could be. All (or many) of our friends would get paid a dollar for every A on their report cards. Of course, we shared this with our parents! They, however, firmly stated that Cs were fine as long as we were trying. If we wanted A's, we had to do it for ourselves. I wonder how they got to be so wise? As a teacher, I always find the task of assigning grades to students' work an agonizing experience. It seems that grades are more of an indication of my success or failure as a teacher than of the performance of my students. If we always work at doing the best we can do and being the best we can be, assigning a grade seems pointless and even degrading. How do grades help us care about our students? What is knowledge anyway, and who's knowledge counts? As a teacher, I need to know humility.

I am my mother's daughter. My mom taught me the importance of unconditional love and self-sacrifice that holds no debts. She loves all of her

children for who they are, not for who she might wish them to be. Love is in her gentle touch, her kind words and love is in her eyes. My mom's love is captured in her thousands of pictures she has taken over the years. These pictures are her stories of laughter, tears, joy and caring. Her stories, through pictures, capture a life of experiences and knowing. When we sit down with one of Mom's most recent photo albums, we laughingly say, "Do we have a couple of hours?" My mother's stories, through pictures, teach me about my history. When I listen to the stories of my students, I learn about their history. I must remember to remember their stories. Only then can I begin to know and understand who they are and from where they come.

I am my father's daughter. I know him as a great storyteller. Each time he tells his story, it gets bigger and better! At least that's what my mom would say! I love best his stories about his childhood growing up in a very poor Scottish family. I know he had a tough childhood, yet his stories always have so much compassion. I don't remember my dad ever going to church, yet he is the most moral person I know, and not just in his words (he never speaks badly of anyone). Through his actions and his way of being, he has taught me humility. His way of being has taught me to care about people, ideas and things. He is the smartest man I know (well, perhaps it's a tossup between him and my partner!) We are no better and no less than any other human being. Each human on this planet has a special place and it is our responsibility to honour all others with dignity. As teachers, we must know compassion so that we can

teach compassion. That is the hope upon which we can build a better world that connects us as humans and connects us to all of the world's living and non-living things.

I remember as a child thinking that my grandmother was so "cranky". She cared about her garden more than she cared about me. She had these amazing crabapple trees which she cared for so lovingly. We, the children, dare not ever pick an apple off one of those trees! Eat the ones on the ground. I didn't understand at the time the importance of caring for plants. My grandmother connected me to nature in all of her caring ways. As I grew older I listened carefully to her stories and wondered why I ever thought she was "cranky". She was a proud, dignified woman who spent all of her life caring for others and for her garden.

As I write this report, my daughter has just begun her first year of university. I remember her first day of kindergarten as clearly as if it happened yesterday. She was my only child at the time and only four and a half years old. She was still a baby in this life, in my life. How could I send her out into the world on her own? Who would take care of her? Who would hug her and say "I love you"? Who would pull up her socks and pants and wipe her drippy nose? But there she stood on this dreary, rainy day, long pigtails, shiny blue raincoat, lunch kit clutched in tiny hand. With nose pressed against the patio window, she waited for the school bus to arrive. Suddenly she turned, looked at me with saddened eyes and stated with all the determination her little voice could

muster, "I'm sick, Mommy. I can't go to school today". Her dad, with one glance at my faltering - brave face, quickly took that tiny hand in his. With words of encouragement about the fun and excitement she would have that day, he marched her off to the bus. I can still hear the empty silence in the house that day. Now she's in university and at times I hear the same empty silence. The only difference between those two first days is this time she left in a black Camero instead of a yellow school bus! Who, out in that big world is going to take care of her and love her like we do? As a teacher, I remember that every student is somebody's child. We must care about and love our students with as much passion as we do our children, without embarrassment, without apology. That is our responsibility.

These are some of the stories that form and inform me as a person, a learner and a teacher. All of my stories are not happy. Although I remember being a very happy and carefree young child, I remember my adolescence being quite different. I struggled with power and control, justice and injustice, oppression of my soul. I questioned authority (sometimes that of my parents). I questioned religion, dominance and our society as a whole. Why? I think young people have a lot more intelligence than we give them credit for. That little child who was shy and quiet at school began to fight for her identity. She was fighting to reclaim her confidence, her place and her soul. Her (my) journey continues.

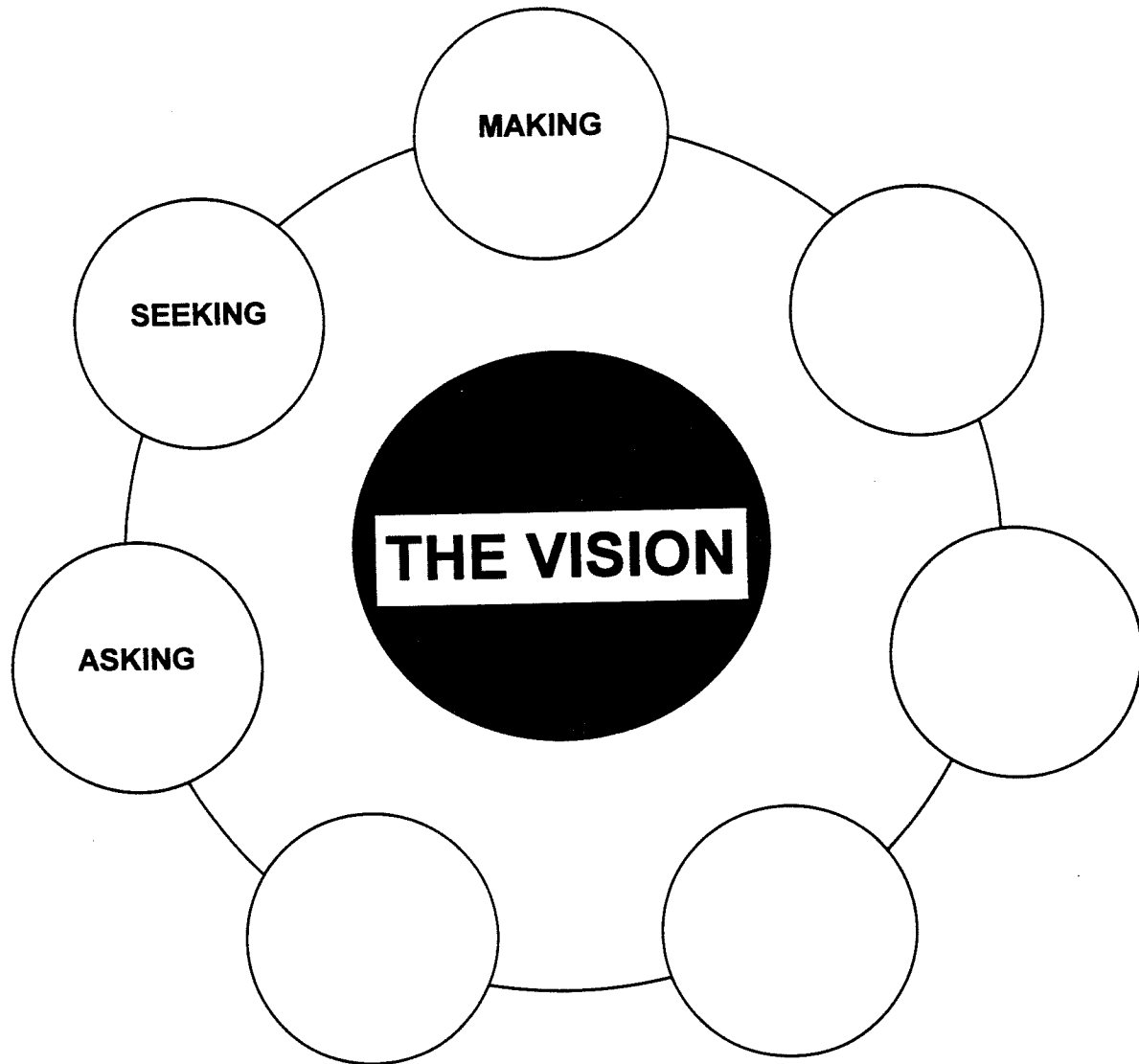
Through family and community, we receive love and care and we learn to love and to care for others. SUNTEP promotes a relationship of family and

community because we love and care for our students. Our students teach us every day. We think and talk about racism, the affects of it, the incidents of it, and the elimination of it. We change and grow and often believe the world is changing and growing with us. Sometimes we get hard knocks. The stories of my students, the pre-interns, speak about compassion, humility, dignity, harmony, trust, respect, caring, loving and much, much more. They have a lot of knowledge to share with those of us who are willing to listen. Cajete's (1994) wise words talk about how we come to understand:

In our seeking we begin with what we know, but we come to realize it isn't very much. Then we begin to wander, to go here, to go there; we learn how to let go, open up and deal with uncertainty. We experiment; we learn again how to listen, how to observe, how to be humble, and how to find and ask for help. (p. 72)

We have a special song, individually and collectively. Our song informs us about the decisions we will make as teachers learning to teach. Our song will guide us as we make new stories and new meanings in the journey of learning to teach.

The Connected Rings of Indigenous Visioning



Making is ... a stage where - through the act of creating something - we fine tune and elaborate on what we have learned. This leads to further discovery and understanding. ... With our gift of creativity, empowered by our vision, what we create has the power to affect the lives and thoughts of others. (Cajete, 1994, p. 72)

Chapter Four

Creating a Symphony

Individuals are enabled to reach completeness by learning how to trust their natural instincts, to listen, to look, to create, to reflect and see things deeply, to understand and apply their intuitive intelligence, and to recognize and honor the teacher of spirit within themselves (Cajete, 1994, p. 227)

Learning to teach is as much learning about self, others and the world as it is learning strategies, methods and skills. In Chapters Two, Three and Four of their teaching autobiography, the pre-interns reflect on their four weeks of field experience and create new meanings about who they are as individuals and who they are as teachers to be. Through story, the pre-interns relive their experiences and reflect on their relationships with students and co-operating teachers. As they write their stories, the pre-interns create new visions and new hopes for the future. They create a symphony that "has the power to affect the lives and thoughts of others" (Cajete, 1994, p. 72). Cajete talks about this process of making:

Making involves the act of creating something new as a result of one's visioning. The Making is a work, or series of works, of deep significance that symbolically include what one has learned about the self, the world. Through the visioning process we contact the

universal center of creativity, and we create our lives anew.
(p. 72)

Creating a Symphony: The Collective Narrative

My journey continues as my horizon expands. My journey's pathway leads me to a road where I have the opportunity to grow professionally and personally. My road is my pre-internship field experience. The road is unknown and mysterious to me but I have support and encouragement to travel down that way. My support and my courage will light the way down that mysterious path as I gather and collect learning experiences and memories that I know I will treasure for a life time. This pathway is more than a teaching journey, it is a journey intertwined with my life and my heart. I enter the pathway, I enter my journey, I enter my field experience with my eyes open, my head held high, and my heart open wide. I feel that I can handle whatever circumstances or situations that I may face during my week. I am ready to put my teaching philosophy into practice; I am ready to teach and, I am ready to learn.

Field experience, I believe, can be a rewarding experience or one of failure. Everything begins and ends with the cooperating teacher. It doesn't matter how skilled and confident the student may be, if they don't have a confident, encouraging and understanding co-op (co-operating

teacher), their experiences most likely will not offer growth.

I feel honoured and lucky to have had a cooperating teacher who challenged my abilities, was confident enough to encourage my strengths and understood that perfection does not happen overnight, if at all. It was through my co-op that I was given the opportunity to grow. This is the story of my growth, one of learning more than one of teaching.

I was so excited to go out into the schools, mind you I was also very nervous. When I went into the classroom to observe and get to know the children, I was suddenly reminded of why I wanted to become a teacher. Seeing all of the Aboriginal students in my classroom was the best reminder I could have received.

My coop said that I could begin my teaching on Tuesday due to Monday being supervised by a substitute but I thought about how the day was going so far and decided that I should do my lesson today. By teaching a formal lesson, I think the students will see me more as a teacher and not only as an observer/helper. I feel like I have little authority and no respect from them so far and if I wait until Tuesday things may worsen. I need their respect today, therefore I must earn it today.

My introductory lesson theme is "respect". The motivational set works awesome (the set is free time - how to earn it simply by respecting yourself and others including myself). It hooked the students immediately. The lesson goes very well. The students are great. My lesson involves

the whole class in an activity on the floor in a circle, group work, and individual desk work. Two students refused to participate and just sit in their desks and watch. (The usual routine when students refuse to participate is to send them in the hall or to the office.) I feel that if these two students refused to participate they are punishing themselves because the students who do cooperate will have a great time. As well, the students who only observe still learn about respect because they can see and hear the lesson. In the hall or office, they could not.

Another situation that I am unhappy with is a young boy who has been ostracized since he began the school year. This is one situation that I myself can relate to and sympathize with but cannot understand. I understand the pain, but I cannot understand the cause. After the home bell went (he) helps me display the respect sentences that the class has made. He comments that the display looks nice. I apologize for the situation of all the students refusing to work and sit by him. He reassures me that he is all right and he is used to it. I look at him and only wish that I could reverse the damage that has already been done to him but I know I cannot. It is too set in. If that was my class, I would never let it go as far as it has (maybe that is easy for me to say since I am not in that situation as a full-time classroom teacher) but I can feel his hurt and cannot understand how this situation can go on ignored.

Being in a classroom with twenty-six students is plenty of work for a

teacher, but you know it is all very worthwhile. The five days that I spent with those students, I learned so much from them. I learned a lot about myself as a growing teacher. I found that some of the students were happy on the outside, but not happy in their hearts. You know it is pretty sad that children so young have such major problems to deal with.

I wonder what some of these children go through at such a young age and how they survive. Some of them are hungry and have to wait until everyone else is done their lunch so that they can have the leftovers. Every day that I was there, one little girl would ask me if she could have the leftovers. I felt so bad for her. After all of these experiences, it makes me want to become a teacher even more. I feel that as long as these students can make it to school everyday, I want to make it worth their while. When I reflect on my experiences, I know what some of these kids are going through and I want to be there when they come to school. I want to make it a safe and happy place for the six hours they are there every day. As I reflect on this situation, it shows how involved teachers are in the school life, their own lives, and the lives of the students they encounter in their learning experience as a teacher. Being a strong, caring and willing teacher is the only hope for those children out there because the students' actions not only come from the home but they come from the teacher as well.

The day came when one of my little guys brought me down to

reality. I was so busy teaching my lessons and trying to do everything perfect that I ignored one of my students. He is such a great character. He was one of the students who always wanted my attention when I was teaching. But the sad thing was I never realized this until I was told about his background. My co-op noticed that he was being very interruptive while I was teaching. She was very straight with me about the issue of this child. She told me this student had been neglected by his family. He often interrupts her while she is teaching and requires plenty of attention.

Two Aboriginal boys are friends, both popular, outgoing and handsome but come from two distinct worlds. This comparison makes me think of how students' home lives affect their attitude and personality at school. I realized that we cannot assume that all students' home lives are pleasant and supportive. With that same token, I realize how important it is to be aware of the situations that the students live in - inside and outside of school. As a teacher I see the importance of being aware of both the negative and positive situations of the students' lives. I know that I cannot be ignorant and think that all students that come to school have a perfect life and are eager to learn. Awareness is the key because their life situations not only affect them at home but they also bring their experiences and attitudes to school. It affects how they learn and what they learn. It affects their total being. If I do not accept that then I am ignorant and selfish. My teaching philosophy, built upon my total being,

affects my teaching; therefore the students' total being will affect their learning.

I feel good because my lessons went relatively well, and on the other hand I feel selfish and guilty. I feel selfish because I have been overly concerned with myself and my lessons. I feel guilty because I whined and whimpered about myself being dealt a rotten hand in my childhood and when compared to some of the students' lives, mine is petty. I feel guilty because I grew up with both my parents in a stable household when many of my students are growing up without parents and without a permanent home. I feel guilty because I want to take one of the students home and try to save him from his past sorrows. I want to take him home and be the mom that he so unfairly lost. I want to hold him and tell him to cry, because I know he needs to cry. I want him to cry on my shoulder. I feel guilty because I want to comfort him not like a teacher but like a mom. I feel sad because I know nothing or nobody can ever replace his mother and the loss he feels. I feel guilty because when we make eye contact I can only smile as if to say "Everything will be all right" when I know inside he is dying.

This week was a difficult and challenging step on my journey towards the teacher I am meant to be. Difficult and challenging because in addition to the baggage that the students bring to the classroom, I also brought baggage with me. It is difficult to leave your troubles at the

classroom door, but you must. The students not only deserve, but also demand your focus. I always believed I showed the students kindness and compassion, but now I have also learned to feel empathy for them. I now know how difficult it is to stay focused in the classroom when your life outside the classroom is troubling and messy. I also learned, however, that the classroom is a place where you can forget your sadness. The kids have an amazing ability to pull you into their lives, to share their happiness with you and to fill your empty spaces.

It is difficult to focus on one area because I believe that all areas of professional development are intimately intertwined. Without good lesson planning you cannot have good lesson delivery. Lesson planning also determines classroom management strategies which will be employed during the lesson. While planning a lesson you must also consider key questions and how you will respond to students' answers. When developing a lesson plan consideration must also be given to your personal and professional attributes. You must write yourself into the lesson. However, I believe when planning a lesson the most significant consideration is the objectives. Ultimately, the purpose of any lesson is student learning. For this reason, my goal was to plan and deliver lessons which allow students to succeed.

Observing my co-op and using her strategies helped me a lot. She was always helpful in giving me teaching tips, advice. After every lesson I

taught, she would ask me how I felt, then we would discuss it. When I did my lessons and felt that a particular area didn't go as well as I expected, she would always ask me, "What could you have done instead?" or "What would you change?" I would really have to think about it and find out for myself what needed adjusting. She used the same questioning strategies with me as she used on her students. Sometimes I felt frustrated and thought she was too picky but I soon realized that I learned more on my own, rather than depending on her or someone else to 'bail me out'. I appreciated the way she dealt with situations - they were based on respect.

As I reflect on my week, I find myself measuring my growth personally and professionally since my first-year field experience. I have come a long way. At that time I was just getting my feet wet, experiencing but not quite understanding. I was focused more on myself than the students. I wrote lesson plans, taught them and assisted the teacher in various other ways. I did this because I thought it was what a teacher does. This is true but I never really questioned why. Why does a teacher teach? Why does he/she teach in certain styles? Why do children come to school wanting to learn? Why does the teacher use specific books and stories? Why does there seem to be good teachers and bad teachers in students' eyes? This is just a minute sample of questions I ask myself now when I walk into a school or enter a classroom.

I have learned that no matter how much you plan and think about your lessons, you can never predict how students are going to respond to questions, activities or ideas. You many think they will really like to do something, and it will turn out to be boring for them. You many think they will answer your questions one way and they will answer with exactly the opposite. You may think they will catch on to an idea very quickly and it may end up taking the majority of the class just to get the idea or concept across to them. All of these things make teaching an unpredictable, dynamic profession.

Each student is unique and for this reason we must incorporate a variety of teaching strategies and methods into our lessons. By using a variety of teaching strategies we are able to meet the needs of all students. In my math unit I incorporated strategies that would meet the needs of learners with a variety of learning styles. In the students comments on their self-evaluation and unit evaluation forms I found that by using several strategies each student found something in the unit which grabbed their attention and interest and that they were successful at.

Passion for learning is an element I have come to realize about myself. Before I can personally teach something, I have to learn it and hold a certain passion for it. I can't teach something I don't enjoy otherwise it's not worth trying to make my students understand it. It would

be like force feeding a child to eat liver.

It is an honour for me to have students come to me and excitedly tell me about their progress in their assignments or of related information they have heard or found on their own. It is a privilege for me to see students' work after they've put so much time and effort into it because I know they are doing it partly for me.

This is the side of teaching that makes everything worth it. All the fear, worry and failures are trivial compared to the rewards. Earning the respect of a student who previously viewed you as someone not worth listening to or learning from is another incomparable accomplishment. It is the yearning to make a difference in this world that had drawn me to teaching in the first place and when I actually see the differences I make there are no regrets.

My biggest problem is with classroom management but I'm not scared to tackle it like I once was. I realize that situations will occur that will catch me by surprise but I don't feel afraid or intimidated by the unknown. I know that these situations are where I will receive my most valuable teachings and I look forward to them. This sounds insane but it's true. I have learned so much from one month in the classroom, it makes me excited to see what I will learn in four months during my internship. Every time I enter a classroom I gain more confidence in myself and feel stronger about myself. I can see my dream is coming closer and I can't

wait to get there.

I questioned and wondered why my co-op always made changes to my lessons. I learned this week why that is. This knowledge was not explicit but rather implicit in my conversations with her. She wants me to know that she is doing her job to help me become an effective, successful teacher. She wants to show me that she is reading my lessons and providing me with a variety of different skills and strategies. It is quite easy to get caught doing things in the same way all of the time - if you don't try something new, you will always be stuck in a rut. My co-op doesn't want this to happen to me. She wants me to think of every little thing I could change to make improvements to my teaching.

It was only during the last week that she would allow me to decide if I wanted to teach using her suggestions, or try mine and see how they worked. The rest of the time she expected me to teach my lesson including the changes she had made. This added to my nervousness and I found myself doubting my ability to plan effective lessons. I found that, in regard to management of the class and time, it was much easier to take her suggestions and alter my lessons, but I felt that I really wasn't learning from doing that. People learn by trying new things and maybe making a few mistakes. I felt that my co-op wanted me to be a teacher just like her. However, by the end of the first week she realized that I have my own way of handling the class and teaching, and these ways are not necessarily

worse than hers - they are simply different. My co-op was more prone to point out my mistakes, or areas that are in need of improvement, or activities, strategies or methods that she would have changed. She seemed to be nit-picking the finer details. I let this get to me the first week I was in the classroom but after the weekend I realized that she was simply providing me with some sense of areas that I should be reflecting on and attempting to improve on.

My co-op told me that the areas she had noticed I am lacking in experience or skills or am in need of refinement on, are areas most interns don't even think about because they are too busy thinking about the basics of teaching. She told me that I have a handle on the basics and now should be focusing on the fine-tuning in order to become an exceptional teacher. This was definitely a confidence booster, and really made me feel good about my internship in the fall. I was beginning to doubt my ability, as well as my desire to become a teacher. This was due partly to the negativity or constructive criticism and partly because of my own insecurities. However, after she told me her reasons for pointing out the areas for development and refinement, there won't be anything holding me back from becoming a 'real' exceptional teacher!

The areas of strength that I see in myself are in lesson planning, preparation and organization. I spend a lot of time thinking about previous lessons and experiences in the classroom and attempt, in planning, to

foresee any difficulties I or the students may have with the lessons I teach. I familiarize myself with available materials and attempt to firstly understand what the students already know and build on that. This is an area that was easier during the last two weeks than previously, simply because I knew the students that much better.

Questioning is an area that I am working on. Again, once you get to know the students better, it is easier to know what kind of questions to use. I was becoming more specific in my questioning as well as asking more higher-level questions in order to create higher-level thinking. I believe this is an area in which all teachers strive to achieve a higher level, and in so doing strive to achieve a higher level of thinking in their students.

I've learned to have faith in my own capabilities. I've learned that as an educator I will forever be learning about just how this teaching stuff works. I've learned that even the best thought out plans sometimes fail and that it is from these failures that I learn the most. I've learned that I really love being a teacher and being with the kids.

I find that the children in this new generation are so intelligent and that is why we must call them our teachers as well. I have come to learn that everyone is a teacher and every person has the potential to be a teacher. You know, two years back I would have never said these words because I thought you had to be smart and knowledgeable from scratch. But the real world showed me that you learn as you go and you never

stop learning in the process of becoming a teacher. I'm beginning to see how everything is important and how it is the teacher's job to select and arrange everything regarding education and present it to students so it becomes important to them. Everything is coming together, the information I have acquired as a student and my application of it as a teacher. Taking risks and finding the right combinations that work for my students is the challenge I face in the future, but I feel if the job is well done the rewards will be there.

The experience in the classroom is the peak of all that is unknown. You climb and discover and when you have discovered, you continue to want to climb for more. Every classroom has so much story and experience. The innocent little children have happy and sad stories. Many of these children have experienced more hardship than me. But I learn from their experiences and I grow to understand.

I don't believe any teacher ever reaches the point where he/she can say reflection is no longer necessary. Being involved in a profession that touches so many other people and their lives requires reflection on yourself and those you are in contact with. Examining and thinking about things you have done and said is the only way to develop an understanding of yourself as a teacher and the impact you are having on the lives of your students. Children are the most precious gift a person can have. Parents think so; grandparents think so; aunts and uncles think

so; teachers think so. In the end they all grow into adulthood and remember the teachers who impacted their lives - positively or negatively. Those that are otherwise are often forgotten. I want to be one of those that is remembered positively!

Creating a Symphony: My Reflections

Life stories are living and dynamic; they need to be told and retold, heard and reheard to reveal their meaning. One's identity lies in the consistency of the story as one travels through the spirals of life. Yet, real change or transition to a new spiral can only come when one revises or reconstructs the life story. (Miller, Cassie & Drake , 1990, p. 28)

Before I began my first teaching position in a northern Metis community, I had little (or no) contact with Aboriginal people, and cross-cultural education had not been a part of my teacher training program. As I made the long journey northward from the southern Saskatchewan city in which I was raised, I cannot recall thinking about the culture of the children who were to be my grade one students. I had not thought about children as being the same or different. I did (do) believe all children are unique and special. I remember that I was excited and nervous about the journey ahead because my intuition, or my spiritual centre, told me this journey would change my life. I knew the day I saw the advertisement for this particular teaching position in the newspaper that my life was about to change. Sometimes things happen that are magical. I wanted this

job with all my heart.

As a young, naive, innocent and idealistic first-year teacher, I had a great deal to learn. I believed, without really thinking about it, that as humans we are all equal, and that we are capable of living in harmony with each other and with our environment - that is, if we so chose. What would there be to question about this? But I soon discovered that even this remote and isolated community was affected by dominance, oppression, intolerance and racism. I have learned, as a non-Aboriginal person and teacher, I often live between two worlds. That is why I must go inside myself and listen with my heart to the perspectives, beliefs and values of the students under my care. I must listen to their stories of meaning as they live and make sense of their lives. I listen for what it is they care about deep in their hearts.

My first years of teaching were much like the experiences of my pre-intern students except that I did not have a cooperating teacher! There was a lot I needed to learn quickly in order that I not fail my students. Like the pre-interns, this would be a journey of learning as much as a journey of teaching. And like the pre-interns, my students would be my greatest teachers. My stories of experience as a teacher create and recreate my knowledge.

At this particular time in 1973 the term "whole language" had not been invented. At least, it was not a part of our teaching vocabulary. But after only a few months of "xeroxing like crazy", correcting forever and listening to children stumble through readers in which most of the vocabulary was foreign to them,

my intuition told me this method of teaching was not working. Even more than that, it was boring for the children and for me. The curriculum and the teaching materials available were neither culturally sensitive nor relevant to the children in this Metis community or, I suspected, in any other northern community. Along with several other primary teachers, and with the support of the administration and the primary consultant, we threw out the readers and workbooks and said good-bye to the teacher guide books. Pretty brave for first-year teachers. But now what?

There were seven of us. What did we know about teaching? It would have been morally wrong for us to stay with what we knew was not working, what was not right for our students, and continue to be the oppressor. Instead, the students and teachers would create curriculum that spoke from the voices of the children it served. The community, we realized, would need to be involved as the decision makers in the education of their children. We knew that we needed to use our students' language (non-standard English), their experiences and their stories to make learning more meaningful and more fun. We learned that curriculum created from the lived experiences of the students and their community was a much more culturally relevant way of learning and teaching. We were free to use our imaginations, to dream and to fantasize. It was an exciting time.

I cannot remember being "taught" this, but I wanted my classroom to be a place where my students could feel comfortable and cared for. I wanted my

classroom to be warm and inviting so that my students would feel safe and free to share their lives and their stories with me. It was my responsibility to know my students on the "inside" and to let them know me the same way. Then, we could learn from each other.

My classroom walls were covered with neatly displayed work of the students. If we expect students to take pride in their work and pride in who they are as individuals and community members, we must as teachers treat the things they do with respect. Crumpled up pieces of paper stuffed into desks have little or no value. The art work of the students enriched our room with a special beauty and helped to make us a family.

There were many issues I had to struggle with as a teacher in a cross-cultural setting. I had to learn to trust my intuition and continue to do the things I believed were right for my students, but I also had to question what I was doing that might be wrong. In what ways might I be imposing my beliefs and values on my students that may be in opposition to their beliefs and values? I did not have a great deal of knowledge about the culture or ways of knowing of the children in the four different Aboriginal communities in which I taught. As a beginning teacher, I did not have a great deal of knowledge about what it meant to teach. (Maybe I should not admit this!) However, I do believe that most of what I learned over eight years of teaching Aboriginal children, I could not have learned from texts, theories and academics. I learned through my experiences of living in and being a part of the community. I learned to listen carefully to the

voices and the stories of the people whose children I would teach. Over time, the community and the students would teach me how to be a good teacher. Still today, I only "little bit know something" (Ridington, 1990). It's a long journey.

I often recreate, reflect on, and tell stories about my experiences as a classroom teacher. Each time I retell a story (an experience collected in my soul), whether it is to myself or shared with others, I make new meanings about my world and the world of teaching. Stories, says Rosen (1985) come "to life in the ebb and flow of leisurely talk and most of all in the mind with its eternal rummaging in the past and its daring, scandalous rehearsal of scripts of the future" (p. 12). My stories, like my life, have multiple layers of meanings. Story allows me to use my imagination and find new meanings. It allows me to find better ways to be and act as a teacher. Maybe, in the telling of my stories of experience, I teach others something about their world. It's hard to say. Stories are like that.

Like the story of snaring rabbits . . .

My students and I were doing an integrated unit in social studies. One activity was to set rabbit snares and have an Elder come in and show us how to skin rabbits and make rabbit stew. With the help of several very knowledgeable students, we tromped into the surrounding forest and carefully set our snares. The next day, we trudged off again to retrieve our catch. What, no rabbits? Just

our luck. Oh well, off to the community for help. We need rabbits for our stew and we need them now.

This was my first experience at snaring and skinning an animal. I was brave and in the end quite amazed. It was just like peeling off a tight glove. Everything was going perfectly. Time to make the stew. In go the eyeballs, the skulls and those long, long legs. (I'm feeling a little worried now.) As the stew simmers away on the stove, I have a few simmering thoughts in my head. What will I do when my students start arguing about who gets the "drum sticks" and what will I do with those skulls? Nobody will want them.

The time arrives to dish up and eat our hard earned rabbit stew. The plates are spread over the counter and anxious faces crowd in as I spoon out each dish. And the fights begin. "I want the skull". . . "I want the skull". . . "I want the skull"!

Or the story of Bobby . . .

Bobby was such an angry little boy. One moment he would be silent and withdrawn and the next second he might fly into a rage and start to beat on someone. It seemed the other students were always taunting him, as though they enjoyed his loss of control and angry outbursts. When Bobby reached this point, it was very difficult to talk to him or to calm him down. He was strong and ferocious in his rage. But most of the time Bobby was such a neat kid. I enjoyed him and tried to figure out what his anger was all about. Bobby had witnessed a lot in his young life, and when I learned his story I did not have to wonder any

longer. I observed Bobby. I watched and observed his reactions to everything.

One thing I learned quickly about his outbursts was that they occurred when he became frustrated. He always insisted he was stupid and couldn't do his work so I was careful to give Bobby things to do at which he would be successful. I was patient and carefully talked him through his problems. I watched Bobby so I would know the signs that indicated there would be something to defuse quickly. I worked with the other students to let them know their taunting behaviors would not be tolerated. In a classroom, as in a family, it is everyone's responsibility to look after and to care for each member. Noddings (1992) argues that as teachers we must care about our students and teach them to care about others. She says, "Good teachers do not reject what students see and feel but, rather, work with what is presently seen and felt to build a stronger position for each student. To do this effectively requires the creation and maintenance of a trusting relationship" (p. 107). Why did this seem so obvious to me then?

Stories. I have told Bobby's story at different times with different meanings. I tell his story to teach and to learn. When children are hurting, we want to blame someone . . . usually it is the parents. But as teachers, we have a much greater responsibility. We need to know about, care about, and understand the history of oppression, dominance and racism. We need know about, care about, and understand the history of poverty and what that does to

people. To blame parents, as if they do not love their children as we do, is to live in ignorance. We owe all of our children so much more.

When SUNTEP students go out into the schools on their field experiences, they carry a heavy burden. They carry the "burden" of SUNTEP on their backs. As the saying goes: "one bad apple spoils the cart". The on-campus students go out into the schools as individuals. Our students go out as a collective group because the performance of one student affects the performance of all. Most of the time that is a good thing. Our students are a collective, a community, and we are proud of that. But the collective is made up of individual, unique and special people. They deserve the same dignity all humans want and deserve. We have a long way to go.

As students prepare for the pre-internship they fear who their cooperating teacher will be. Everyone hears about the "co-op from hell" ! What is the fear? What do the pre-interns and interns need from a cooperating teacher? I listen for the meaning in their stories as they struggle to make sense of this teaching "stuff". Like all human learning, they need to feel safe, they need to feel cared for, they need to be free to make mistakes, and they need to be successful. They are students learning to teach and they are teachers learning to learn. It is very complex and there are many interpretations. Can we look at the world through more than one pair of eyes. Like the rabbit story . . .

From my experience and through my eyes, the drumstick would be the

"best" part of the stew. But from the experiences of my students "best" was something different. So what is knowledge anyway? Whose knowledge counts? What is education? Is there a "best" education? Is one interpretation more correct than another? Is there one truth, many truths, or no truth?

The pre-interns are my students now. Their confidence, self-esteem and success is as important to me as it was for my grade-one students. I strive to provide a classroom where they feel comfortable and cared for. I strive to provide a classroom where they feel safe and free to tell their stories and share their lives with me. I need to know them on the "inside" and they need to know me on the "inside". Then we can learn from each other.

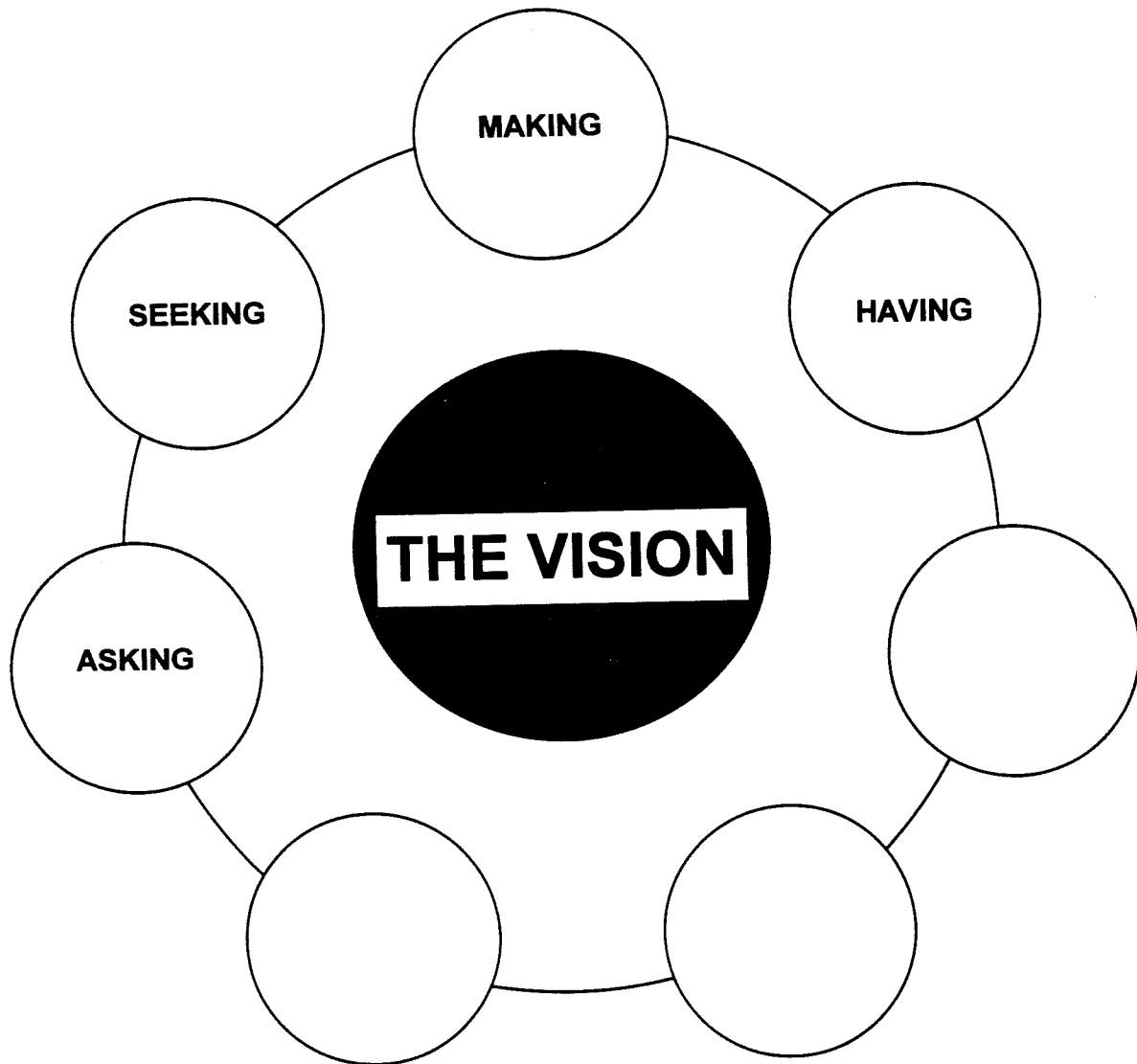
My personal understanding of teaching, classrooms and education is grounded in the meaning I make of my experiences as a teacher, a mother, and a woman. My experiences, which I come to understand through reflection and storying, form the basis of the perspective and philosophy I use to act on the world. Carter (1995) states, "the act of teaching, teachers' experiences and the choices they make, and the process of learning to teach are deeply personal matters inexorably linked to one's identity and, thus, one's life story" (p. 327). My story knowledge bridges my past experiences to understanding the complexity of learning to teach. I use this same story knowledge to help my pre-interns understand the complexity of learning to teach and teaching to learn. Through the telling and writing of their personal histories, they explore their own

perspectives and philosophies of teaching and learning. This allows them, and me, to interweave our experiences with the world of ideas and thus negotiate for new meanings.

I am empowered by my own knowledge and believe that the pre-interns are empowered by their stories which provide a platform for them to act-on-the-world of teaching. They make choices and decisions about classroom management and instruction based on a set of beliefs and values. Through reflection they negotiate new meanings and develop new stories for the future. Their classroom knowledge develops through the construction and reconstruction of their evolving stories of themselves as teachers.

In many ways our lives and our stories, like teaching, are full of paradox. The contradictions and ambiguity cause us to search deeper and more fully. Each time we create something, we look for new creations, "we fine tune and elaborate on what we have learned" (Cajete, 1994, p. 72). Without paradox, contradiction and ambiguity we would have no stories. It is the act of creation, through imagination and intuition, that allows us to keep our stories and to make new stories. We continue to search for good relations with self, others and our world. We search for our ever growing and changing identity. And so, our stories go in circles: overlapping, connecting, new spirals, new circles. Alone and together, our stories create a symphony that affects the lives and thoughts of others. My Grandmother is my conductor. I feel and hear the music and the songs, through my body and my soul, as she guides me along the path.

The Connected Rings of Indigenous Visioning



Having . . . We learn what our vision and our creation mean, and what our inherent responsibilities are in relationship to them... We learn to accept and honor a part of ourselves we have learned about in our visioning. ... We develop the courage to accept the responsibility of becoming co-creators with the world. (Cajete, 1994, p. 72)

Chapter Five

Heartsong

Story connects our lives. We use story to illustrate our own lives or to temporarily immerse ourselves in the lives of characters. Instead of approaching conversation, dialogue, and story in a linear manner, we see them woven together tightly within the life of the community. Like the fibers of a Navajo rug, conversation, dialogue, and story merge and overlap in our transactions, creating the patterns we call meanings. (Pierce & Gilles, 1993, p. ix)

The pre-interns write a chapter of their teaching autobiography after each week of field experience. Through reflection and writing, they make meaning of their ongoing experiences as teachers and learners. I am about to tell another story, but this story is different in that the stories came to me orally in the form of a sharing circle. The pre-interns are now in their fourth year of the program and they are half way through the internship. I invited six participants, as part of this research, to story with me in a sharing circle because this was an important part of our learning each time they completed a field module during the pre-internship. The sharing circle connects us to each other as we move back and forth, from self to other, making new meanings, new understandings and new stories. Through story, we construct and interpret a shared knowledge of what it

means to teach.

The feather is passed around the circle and will go around until everyone who wishes has taken a turn. In the traditional circle, only the person holding the feather is allowed to speak. Our sharing circle has evolved in the following way. The person holding the feather is the speaker (the storyteller). Others may join in or add a comment in an appropriate and respectful way, but the turn always returns to the person holding the feather until the story is complete and the feather passed on. Through story, the interns speak from the authority of their own experiences as they "little bit know something" (Ridington, 1990) about learning to teach. The sharing circle is "a time of reflection, a time of decision, and a time of incubating strategies for implementing our vision in our own reality" (Cajete, 1994, p. 73). The following narrative weaves together the six voices of the interns. Their voices merge, overlap and create "the patterns we call meanings" (Pierce & Gilles, 1993, p. ix). The collective voice represents the life of the community we call SUNTEP. It is a connected knowing. Together and apart, we meet ourselves in the other.

We identify more closely with our own soul. We come to a higher level of self-acceptance and maturity in understanding the difference between being created by circumstance and creating our own circumstances. In the process of Making from our vision, we come to be mature and conscious participants in creating our world. (Cajete, 1994, p. 72)

Join the circle, place your heart in the centre, and listen for the heartsong.

Heartsong: The Collective Narrative

To me interning . . . I was really excited and I was really positive going in. Now I have to work hard. The Lord is punishing me now. Being an intern, I feel you have to experience it. It's hard to explain, like everything with the classroom. The kids, all the management. You have to be there. You have to feel it. It's hard to explain.

We talked about the interns that come and talk to us in Sandy's class. It's like . . . you didn't tell me what it was going to be like!

I remember hearing them. You just have to do it. You have to experience it just like everything else in life. You have to experience it. That's what I learned. What I'm learning about teaching right now is that it is a lot of work. It takes a lot of your time. It's like . . . those are your kids. I don't have kids right now so they are like my kids. I'm always there. I always think, "how can other interns do this with kids of their own?" It's so time consuming. I have twenty kids depending on me and I don't think it stops there.

It keeps you going. You can't leave it there. You go home and you're thinking about one kid or another.

That kid that you think you are failing. I have two kids that are failing. I know I'm failing them and it's like . . . every once in a while I think, yeah, this is working. Then there's another one . . . had no trouble with

him but now he's the one. I have one particular kid in my homeroom classroom, one in particular. I am failing him. The school system is failing him and he's a good kid. He's a good, kind hearted kid, really deep. Everything you try, nothing. It will work for like half an hour then it's like you lost him. There's never enough time.

That's one thing about teaching. There is never enough time. That's what's so frustrating. I need this time. I stay at school until ten at night. Every night.

When you think things are going well and you're caught up to where you should be, something else comes up. An assembly for an hour and a half. Or a chocolate sale or an unscheduled fire drill.

I remember at the beginning of the year listening to the teachers in the staff room saying there's not enough time and stuff. For me I was thinking there was too much time! I liked the assemblies, I liked the plays. Now that I'm full-time teaching, I'm thinking, "Jesus, you're staying ten minutes after school", and parents are getting mad at me. I don't care. They are staying. I need more time. Now I can see what they are talking about.

The greatest difficulty of being an intern is being in somebody else's classroom and knowing that you are just a guest there still. And

that no matter what comes of it, that person still takes full control. It's like when my co-op is not in the classroom. The kids and I have a really good relationship but as soon as she walks back into the classroom the kids just kind of . . . they know her expectations. Even though I'm teaching, it's still not the same. I think that is the greatest difficulty, this having full responsibility. But I'm still happy that I don't have it. I'm not ready yet!

About the fourth week in September, I hated it. I looked forward to the days I didn't have to go. I hated it. It was awful. It wasn't like I hated the kids, I didn't hate the kids. I just hated the . . . I hated the fact that I didn't have enough time to do it. I hate always being watched and being held to a higher standard than regular teachers. I know I'm not a teacher and I know I have lots to learn but you know, sometimes they [the co-ops] don't engage the students in a certain task. I focused on that thing for two weeks and one person would be doodling in their book and that's like one of those things and I'm thinking . . . my co-op's a real good teacher. He's still learning so why is it like a major thing for me.

My co-op and I are the same in a lot of things like our classroom and our beliefs about kids but we are really different and I was trying to be him. Because you try to be him, because you want . . . they are evaluating you. You try to use their management style. I can't be him. Then it was like, this is okay. I can see the end and I can see it was going to be okay.

Now, in my full time teaching, I've been on my own all day, every day. I should be observed more. Because there are still things I want people to look at and say you could try this and you could try this. So you don't get through a lesson plan. Is it the end of the world? It's not the end of the world. You don't always have that knot in your stomach 'cause that was one thing - time management. Now I can get through a lesson. It seems when there isn't the pressure, I can get through a lesson. Before that I would be scrambling before the end to get to that damn closure.

Don't talk to me about closure! One of my biggest things is closure. I would finish my lesson, get them to do my activity or whatever and then I'm always thinking I have to do my closure after the activity is over. But now I know you don't have to do it that way. Do it as soon as you are finished teaching. My teacher is at the back holding up a card with "C". Closure, closure, summary, summary. Oh yeah. Okay. Still once in awhile, like Friday, she still does that. Now I'm doing it all the time!

Do you think sometimes half of your attention goes to the cooperating teacher? Maybe even more than half is your cooperating teacher. Three quarters of your internship is your cooperating teacher. If your cooperating teacher is an unreasonable person and has unreasonable expectations and does not know what is required of us and what is not required of us . . . If you are not a strong enough person to say

no, then . . . and how do you say no? They control it. They control it.

I don't feel that way at all. I don't feel she controls me. She's taught for twenty-four years or whatever. When I went there, I thought she's not going to let me do what I want but she's so willing to learn. She says teach me your classroom management skills. She's actually making me feel important. I can show her something or teach her something. She's just awesome. She's always like, "What can I do? I'll do some correcting when you're teaching. Give me your papers". Okay!

When I first started, I was really nervous. I was really nervous but I was excited. I don't know, but I'm having a really good time. I think mostly because of my co-op. We're almost exactly alike which is kind of scary. We get along so well and she doesn't put any pressure on me. She lets me do what I want. She says this is your classroom and you do your classroom management the way you want to do it. I don't want you copying me. She's always singing and I don't copy that, anyway. (laughter) She's always singing. She just cracks me up. She sings like, "yesterday was Tuesday" and "today is Thursday", stuff like that. The kids just love her. The first couple of weeks we just thought she was nuts. Now, we love her for her singing and I am actually starting to sing. She leaves the room and we sing. We're monotone. It's like we are deaf or something, "Oh C a n a d a . . .". (singing) She just laughs. Anyway, I

am having a good time.

One of the hardest things about interning is just being really frustrated. I feel I don't know enough to reach those students that need help. I don't know enough how to get to them. It really frustrates me and they sit there and they are mad at me because I can't help them. I don't know how to explain so they get the concept. This one kid just looks at me like . . . "I hate you." I'm sorry, but I don't know what to say or do. I look at my co-op and she looks at me, like, "You're on your own." That's what is the biggest thing about teaching right now. Just not doing enough. How to do it? You go slow for three years. You learn all this stuff about Native history and I haven't taught anything about Metis history at all. A lot of the things I learned in school don't relate to teaching the students. For me anyway. You know some strategies but when you are teaching a lesson, of course, some kids are going to grasp it like that and they are going to be done in five minutes. And then there's a kid that's not going to get it for a week. And I'm always thinking, how can I teach this to get this kid to grasp it?

But it's good. At the beginning, I felt a bit of pressure with units and stuff because I wasn't quite sure what I was going to be teaching. But everything fell into place, so that's not bad. The workload isn't bad. Right now, I'm just going from my daybook and I never, never thought I would

get to that stage! But I still need to do some lesson plans because I'm forgetting a lot of little key things in my lessons. Like, stating my objectives. I'll just start teaching. I think of key questions after I'm done my lesson. I should have said this . . . I'm starting to get lazy or something. No, I don't want to get lazy so I'm starting to write more lesson plans along with my units and adding things in all of the time.

I feel, and my co-op and I have talked about it, I am probably doing all those things that I am worrying so much about without even realizing that I am doing them. As long as I know what it is that I want the kids to do. Maybe stating those objectives, I am doing them indirectly. I might not say, today we are going to . . .

I'm not saying that I feel I'm not doing it right.

I was really nervous when I started my internship. I was unsure of what was expected of me and I've always been my own worst critic. I expect more from myself than anyone else does. I'm sort of a perfectionist. And with that, I found myself spread so thin. Because I had so much I had to do, I didn't feel that I was doing any of it the best that I could. But I got over that real quick and just got on with doing it. Because you don't have time to be nit-picking over every little thing. Do what you have to do and get it done. Move on and chalk it up to experience. Full time teaching makes you feel like a real teacher. For the last three years,

you almost feel like a special guest in the classroom. But now you are a teacher and the kids call you teacher anytime of the day. Oh, cool!

I've got to the point now that when I have a question or am wondering about what I'm doing or how I can do it differently, I ask my co-op and she says, "I don't know. When you are done, I'm going to run into the same problem". So, I think, what I am learning about teaching is that you never stop learning as a teacher. You never have all the answers. You just try. Like a parent, you just try to do what's best for the kids at the time and then you analyze the way you did it and do it differently next time or do it the same.

One thing I remember when you were talking about not wanting to be there. There is too much stuff to do. I thought . . . I just felt like quitting. All that frustration, your co-op is watching you, your faculty advisor. All this evaluation. That's another story. It's just like I was getting to the kids. Get this done. Get this done. I was being really pushy. I wasn't being myself like I wanted to be. One day I was walking away . . . and I thought, I have to go back.

And say you're sorry. I had to do that.

Yes. I went to my buddy's house later and I was talking to her about it. I told her I have to go back but there is too much work to do. And then I went home. One of my students, she just lives a couple of

doors down from me, left a blown up love note and a scented candle right by my door. I just started crying and I knew I had to go back. (crying)

What am I learning about the students? I'm learning that they are all unique people. They all have needs. They all have their own hidden agendas.

That's an understatement!

There's a hidden curriculum for each of them.

They know how to get to you at that right moment . . . just when you are ready to strangle them! They say your name or hand you a little present. They know how to get to you.

They know how to meet your needs. They know how to keep you still wanting to be a teacher and still liking it. Still thinking that it's a really good thing to do.

That's a big thing. If the students aren't there the way they are, there wouldn't be teachers in this world. They are always the ones that make us come back.

They are so forgiving. They are always forgiving. I tell them I am not perfect. If I make a mistake and I tell them I'm sorry, or whatever I apologize for, they are always forgiving. They don't hold a grudge.

As long as you give them a sense of justice. I noticed this with

kids. You better acknowledge their sense of justice. They are way smarter about what is right and wrong and what is fair and not fair in the rules and how you run the classroom. They will show you what will work if you listen to them. Don't ever do anything that isn't fair and when they say it isn't fair, ask them, why wasn't it fair? If you listen to them and let them tell you what happened, it's like, it's okay and it's over.

There is one little boy in my class and he just can't shut up. He can't stop talking, he just can't. Friday. It's only a three-day week. I call this student's name. He puts his head down. He knows he's not supposed to talk. Finally, I look at him. He puts his head down again. In the last five minutes of the day he starts yapping again. I just look at him and he looks at me. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'll put my head down". I thought, "You little weasel." I just wanted to hug him. "I've been mad at you all day long and now I just want to hug you, you little weasel! Put your head back up and start talking again!"

I had a good childhood. Two parents. I had Ozzie and Harriet. I know I haven't taken the nicest path since Ozzie and Harriet land. But I think how much better prepared I am to recognize these things. Because of that and because of my three years at SUNTEP, I know that these are the realities. Sometimes I look . . . the staff is a wonderful staff and they are good to those kids. But there are kids who don't come from Ozzie and

Harriet land and you got to know that.

I work with a lot of staff like that. A couple weeks ago the first thing they said . . . we had one girl in our class who was awful. I walked into the staff room after my girl was gone. She's on home school right now. They were discussing four kids that they had inherited this year and the problems these kids are causing the staff. Why doesn't the staff know about these kids. I'm thinking, "You've never encountered anything like this in your life?" What's going on?

It was just the four kids they had inherited. I walk around that school and I see more than just those four kids that are having difficulty. It's just that you want to put the staff in a room and educate them! This is reality.

Some of these students come to school and the farthest thing from their mind is math and reading. Sometimes, they come to school and they've had three hours of sleep and we're expecting them to do this and that. And it's really hard to recognize those things in your kids when you have twenty-five of them. That's my greatest difficulty. Knowing all these kids. One is getting abused, one is not eating, you know. This one can't understand English. Everything is expected for everyone in the classroom and it has to be the same. These people need special attention.

When do you have time to focus on the students' basic needs?

One of the things I've learned is that you are responsible for classroom management but there are things that you just cannot handle and you want to talk to someone about it. It's okay to go and get help. You don't have to do it by yourself. And going for help doesn't mean you are a poor teacher.

My co-op told me that just by sitting at the back of the class while I'm teaching and observing me, she's also observing the students. She says she's learned so much about those kids and the ones that need attention all the time. When she starts teaching again, she will know who to focus on. At the beginning of the term, I was observing her.

For me, you can't teach unless you know your students. I found that out when it came time to do my unit planning. I had a science unit I had created for my pre-internship. When I got into this classroom, I thought, I can't teach this unit. Get real. These kids are totally different. It was just different. I need to know my kids before I create a unit. Or have that unit revised constantly.

At the beginning of this year, I did 'friendship' for two weeks. Just to get to know each other. We worked on it every day. Now we're into 'identity' and we're talking about ourselves and I think that helps a lot because they get to know a lot about me and my family. I am always sharing things about myself. They respect you more because they know

more about you and you know more about them. They see you as a real person with a real life.

If I taught them Social or Math or whatever in my first week, it wouldn't have any meaning. I don't know. You're just there to teach it and you don't care what they are feeling.

For me teaching is easier when I can model it. When I can say okay, this is what it should be like. One of my assignments was to compare a poem and a song. I used mine. The one in Bear Bones and Feathers and when I lost my daughter and stuff. For a long time I thought I should use another one because I thought I didn't want to say that in front of the kids. Not that they don't know everything about me because they ask me five hundred thousand questions! First of all, I thought I might end up crying and I can't do that. But that's what I used as my model and it worked. They are so good to you and we talked about it after, talked about things. They are always surprised when something really happened to me. They think you're this person who had this wonderful life. Nothing has ever happened to you. Something awful has happened to me. Something real. They go . . . you can feel it. They come closer to you. You know that's a good thing. Always trying to find that balance between your relationship as people and relationship with them and teaching.

So, getting to know your students is one of the biggest things about

teaching. I'm beginning to think I'm doing a bit too much cooperative learning, if there is such a thing. But my kids really like to know what it is they are going to do and how to do it. "What do you want me to do"? "I told you what I want you to do. You'll have to do some thinking and come up with how you're going to do it. That's why you have to think". Their faces are like, "help". They are not used to having to think for themselves.

One thing about teaching . . . I really, really like it. This is another secret. In the first and second year, even in my third year and the beginning of my pre-internship, I really didn't like teaching. I liked the kids. I liked being in there but I was like, "Ho-ly, I can't do this". You know. Especially my first year. What am I doing this for? But I knew I would like it. If it was the way I wanted it to be, I liked it. But it was never the way you wanted it to be. So now, you get to do it the way you want to do it. They're learning! I did an Algebra test and they know what they're doing.

In the first year, you are only concerned with yourself. The second year you're only concerned about getting it done. Like us staying up until 2:30 in the morning in Stanley Mission trying to get those friggin lesson plans done. That's all you worry about. At the beginning of your internship . . . I found for me, this was me . . . that was all I was concerned about. You are consumed with getting all that work done. But you start getting that tinge of, "Holy . . . they will go to grade ten and won't

know what they are doing and it's my fault." What an awesome responsibility. An awesome responsibility everyday for their safety, for their growth and who they are as people. And sometimes they think you say something and you think, "Why did I say that?" And then sometimes you do something and you think, "Holy, that was good!"

Heartsong - My Reflections

When I participate in a sharing circle with my students, I am awed by their ability to speak with openness, sincerity, truthfulness and wisdom. Their stories teach me about what it means to be human. They teach me "not so much what the teacher should do, but rather what sort of person the teacher should be" (Hare, 1993, p. 10). Like the pre-interns and interns, I am a teacher/learner. Their experiences deepen my understanding of what it means to teach and what it means to be a "good" teacher. Their voices "merge and overlap" and provide me with a Heartsong that guides me in my long journey of learning to teach.

In describing the thoughtworld of the Dunne-za people and the ways knowledge is gained through experience, Ridington (1990) states:

a person who speaks from the authority of his or her own experience "little bit know something." Knowledge, the elders say, empowers a person to live in this world with intelligence and understanding. ... Every person is expected to "know something." What a person knows is a small but complete whole, not a small and incomplete part of the whole. A person knows a "little bit" about the world in its entirety rather than a

little part of all possible knowledge. ... Knowledge is highly contextualized within experience rather than instrumental to purposes removed from experience. (p. xvii)

As the stories of experience go around the circle, I “little bit know something” about learning to teach. The story knowledge that I gain by participating in the sharing circle is a way of knowing that is not linear but rather takes a circular pathway. Through story, the interns speak from the authority of their own experiences, claim their own meanings (thus their knowledge) and place it within their ongoing story of self. They use their story knowledge to understand the complexity of teaching, not in tiny fragmented pieces but rather as a unified whole. They use their story knowledge to make meaning of their experiences not just as teachers but as caring, compassionate human beings. I do not claim my students’ stories as my own. Rather, it is in the giving and receiving of their stories that I gain my story knowledge of what it means to teach and what it means to be human. I strive to be “open, vulnerable and available” (Huebner, 1985) as we reflect on our experiences and create who we are in relation to each other. As the feather moves around the circle, the pathway of our learning is spiritual for it allows us to explore relationships of love and caring. The pathway is circular as we move back and forth, from self to other, exploring our inner and outer worlds.

When I listen to the stories of my students, I am reminded that being a teacher is an “awesome responsibility”. There are many struggles I go through

as a faculty member in a cross-cultural teacher education program and as the instructor of the pre-internship class. I have the responsibility that my course meet university standards and criteria. I have the responsibility to meet the mandate and goals of the people our program serves. I have the responsibility to my students that I meet their needs and expectations of learning to teach. And I have the “awesome responsibility” to the children and the schools of our communities, who want and deserve the very best teachers. Of course, these responsibilities overlap, interconnect, and sometimes, collide!

There are many times when I feel like I am failing my students. Teaching is very complex and personal, and I wonder how I can possibly prepare them for the realities of the classroom. How do I send them out into the world of classrooms and students with all of the skills and the confidence they will need to succeed? How do I provide my students with a safe, trusting and caring environment that will allow them to be human, to make mistakes and to keep balance and harmony in their lives and spirits? How do I, as their instructor, help them to be the “very best” teachers they can be? “There is never enough time”!

I cannot be afraid to love and care for my students. This relationship of love and caring is one point, perhaps, in which my responsibility to the university and my responsibility to my students might appear to collide. How do I remain objective to the standards and criteria of a university course and be in a caring

relationship with my students at the same time? How do I objectively evaluate their performance as students learning to teach? How do I make choices and decisions about everything I do as a teacher? The relationship between my students and myself must be one of respect and openness. I must share my humanness with them so that they will share their humanness with me and with others. The strength of caring may be the way I can truly contribute to their ability to succeed. I do not apologize for caring about who my students are as human beings. Cajete (1994) expresses the idea that objective analysis has limitations to the “multidimensional, holistic and relational reality of education” (p. 20). He states that

It is the affective elements - the subjective experience and observations ... that have characterized and formed Indigenous education since time immemorial. ... It is these aspects of Indigenous orientation that form a profound context for learning through exploring the multidimensional relationships between humans and their inner and outer worlds. ... Education is essentially a communal social activity. (p. 20)

The sharing circle is an opportunity to reflect on the experiences my students have in their journey of learning, but their experiences are not always happy (or good) ones. There are times when we laugh together and there are times when we cry together. My students tell their stories and ask questions in order to construct, interpret, reconstruct and reinterpret their experiences. They do this to make meaning and to heal. Healing is an important step on the pathway of self knowledge. As I write this thesis, my life continues as an

instructor of the pre-intern course. The following story is a lesson in healing, and a lesson in learning humility.

My pre-intern class has just completed their second field module. As always, we have a sharing circle to reflect upon, and learn from, the experience. When we begin, I remind my students we are professionals and that we must honour the circle by listening to and being respectful of others. My role as “teacher” and my role as “professional” are sometimes at odds. My role as teacher overlaps with my role as healer. The stories the students have to share are not always positive. Do I silence their voices to experiences that have wounded their spirits and, perhaps, the spirits of the children in their classrooms? Do I silence my voice to the intolerance and oppression that sometimes occurs in our schools? Do I turn a blind eye because we are professionals and there are those who would not want to hear the stories we might have to tell? I stand willing to take the risk for I cannot expect “certain professional behaviors” from my students and ignore the realities they face on a daily basis. I cannot silence their stories for this is their way of knowing and their way of healing.

Let me explain. There often is a belief within the dominant culture that an Aboriginal program is a less-than-superior program. We have come a long way in the seventeen years we have been in this community. We have worked hard at public relations. We have demanded excellence from ourselves as faculty

and students. We have many graduates out in the teaching profession who are excellent role models for students and teachers. But racism and oppression have a very long history. When even one of our students “fails” or acts in a way that is considered “unprofessional”, racism often rears its ugly head in the form of blanket condemnation of our entire program. So how do I silence the voices of my students when they see behaviors by some of our fellow professionals that are less than acceptable? The stories have to be told.

The relationship between the cooperating teacher and the pre-intern / intern is very often the focus of discussion and I have come to understand the importance of a positive, supportive and caring relationship to the success of this experience. What is my responsibility if this relationship is hurting one of my students? From our sharing circle, I gain the knowledge and the courage to have a caring relationship with my students. The same caring relationship between the cooperating teacher and pre-intern often exists. In all stories there are multiple layers of meaning and many interpretations.

My story continues in this way. One of my students (a pre-intern) is in a primary classroom and she loves these young children. It is the first time I have placed a student with this particular cooperating teacher but I have heard she is a model teacher. There are a number of Aboriginal students in the classroom. After the first week of field experience (out of four) my student is hurting badly. This classroom teacher, my student tells me, yells at the students “all of the time” and she feels like she is being yelled at, as well. She is told, by her

cooperating teacher that she needs to be more firm with the students. She takes this to mean that she must yell at them. She struggles with the apparent contradiction between yelling at students and demonstrating love and acceptance. I explain to her that being firm does not mean we have to “yell”. We talk about the many meanings of classroom management and discuss some possible strategies.

She returns two months later for her second week in the classroom. After the first day her confidence is shattered and she tells me that she cannot go on. She is thinking and feeling that she does not have what it takes to be a teacher. We have a long telephone conversation and I try my best to reassure her that she can do it. Several days later, I visit the classroom to observe a lesson. It is obvious that she is paralyzed with fear. Again, I do my best to reassure her that these students need her and that with time, experience, and hard work, she will be a “good” teacher. The week ends and we have our sharing circle.

My student breaks down in uncontrollable tears. We all wait in hushed silence for her to regain the ability to speak. (I have learned to allow these times of silence without the need to blurt out words of wisdom.) She explains that she is surprised by her breakdown and did not realize she was under this much stress. Being in this classroom, and imagining her own children being yelled at in this way, was more than she could take. This was “too much” like her own childhood. The hurt she felt for the children in this classroom reached deep into her heart. What is my responsibility as her teacher? Do I send her back to this

classroom for the final two weeks of her field experience? Do I toughen her up to the hard realities of our schools? Do I ask her to stand back objectively and learn from the bad experiences as well as the good? Do I speak to anyone at the school or division level? Do I have a responsibility, not only to my student, but to the students in that classroom? Do I sit in judgement of teachers?

This was a professional and ethical dilemma and I decided to talk to our elder. The decision became easy: my student is my first responsibility. I needed to talk to her and let her know that I would find her a new placement for the remaining two weeks. But the decision would be hers. Her response taught me courage and humility. She could not be moved, she explained, because that would hurt her cooperating teacher's feelings and she could not let the children down by not returning to the classroom. This is one of the things that truly amazes me about so many of our students. They are so forgiving and they have enormous courage.

Through the giving and receiving of stories, we become interconnected in a web of caring. Sometimes we have to tell the "bad" stories because they are an important source of our learning and our healing. My own telling of this story has been healing to me. Through the telling and reflecting on the story, I was able to make the right decision. I have an "awesome responsibility" to respect, and find balance in, the human and professional relationship I have with my students. My students nurture my spirit and teach me about a better way to be in this world. I have learned that teaching and being a teacher is deeply

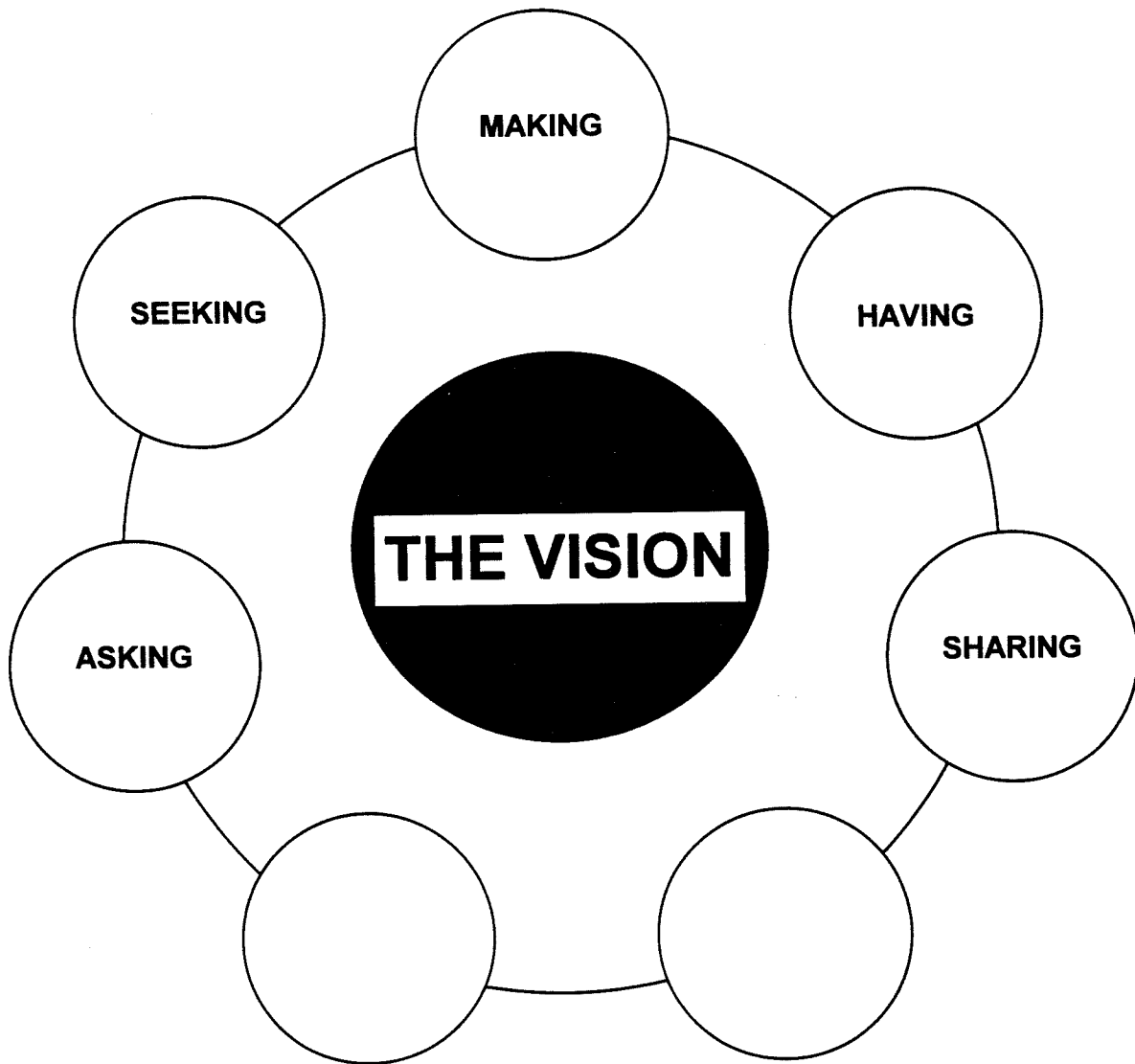
embedded in relationship. Learning about and being 'in relationship' requires the ability to reflect on one's values, beliefs, attitudes and actions. In Nodding's (1992) book, *The challenge to care in school: An alternative approach to education*, she states the importance of being able to "empty the soul of its own contents in order to receive the other" (p. 17). When we are in the classroom with our students, we must leave our baggage behind and listen, really listen to the stories and their meanings. In a caring relationship, we will find the way to do what is right and good.

The Having stage honors being with our vision and our creations. It is a time of reflection, a time of decision, and a time of incubating strategies for implementing our vision in our own reality. (Cajete, 1994, p. 72,73)

The feather takes its path around the circle. Together we create a Heartsong to live and teach by. The words of Ridington (1990) best describe the meanings:

You, the reader, must authorize your own meaningful reading of these texts. Their authority cannot come down to you from me as author or even directly to you. ... In the reality of Indian experience, each story contains every other. They circle one another like the seasons. They circle like the hunter and his game. ... Indian stories make sense in the circles they create in the mind of a person who reads or hears them. Listen to these stories for the circles they create within your own experience. Listen to them as teachings. Listen to them and dream into them. In the dreaming they will become your own. (p. xvii)

The Connected Rings of Indigenous Visioning



Sharing . . . Our vision becomes a part of the life and spirit of the community. We share the life we have sought and found with others. . . . Teaching and sharing are part of the process of becoming more whole and spiritually mature. (Cajete, 1994, p. 73)

Chapter Six

Touching Spirits

Teachers create curricula (circles of learning and teaching) through constantly creating models and applying them to actual teaching situations. Ideally, teachers constantly adjust their models to fit their students and the changing realities of education. Through such constant and creative adjustment, teachers and students engage in a symbiotic relationship and form feedback loops around what is being learned. In this way, teachers are always creating their stories even as they are telling them. (Cajete, 1994, p. 17)

The four-month internship is now complete and the students have returned to the SUNTEP Centre to complete their post-internship classes. It is a time of reflection and a time to revisit some of the issues surrounding education that have arisen during this field experience. I remember when a group of interns came to our Friday student/staff lunch and one of the pre-interns stated, "They look like teachers now!" I replied, "That will be you, one year from now". The pre-intern looked at me as if to say, "Yeah, right!"

Something magical happens during the four-month period the interns are out in the schools. They go into the internship as students and they come back to us as teachers! Of course, the interns are the first ones to say they have much to learn about teaching, but they go out to the schools with a vision and

they return with many new meanings. Through story, they teach us - and themselves - what they have learned. "Teaching and sharing are part of the process of becoming more whole and spiritually mature" (Cajete, 1994, p. 73). Through sharing, they are once again "a part of the life and spirit of [our] community" (p. 73). I present the following collective narrative from the stories told by six interns (my participants) in the final chapter of their teaching autobiography. They speak from a voice deep inside. We become "touching spirits" as we journey down the pathway of learning to teach. The creation and sharing of this narrative is my way of becoming "more whole and spiritually mature" (p. 73). Listen carefully as we continue our dance of meaning. Stories are like that, you know.

Touching Spirits - The Collective Narrative

For the past four years of my life, I have been immersed in the SUNTEP program. My life has consisted of reading, studying and a lot of extra curricular activities. This was a new chapter in my life. I truly believe that I have grown great leaps as a person: emotionally, spiritually, mentally and of course physically. I had many wonderful experiences by being in the program. Experiences that I could never have imagined.

As I reflect on those experiences, I never at the time thought they would have made a difference in my life and yet they have. I have met

many wonderful people and made best friends. I have listened to many stories; people telling of their experiences in life, of their growing and of the struggles they have endured. One of the greatest things I have learned is that people touch other people by sharing their stories.

As a teacher you are given the opportunity to share your stories with children. And hopefully give them [the students] the same opportunity to explore who they are, discover their abilities and strengths and make meaning in their lives. This is what I have received by being in the SUNTEP program.

I have always wanted to be a teacher. But I never really thought that I had the potential to become one. Academics had never been my strong point but I realize now that you can get through anything with help and support. All I can think about right now is that I am so happy. Happy that I have actually made it. It still hasn't quite sunk in that I am a teacher. I say this now because I feel like a teacher. I am a teacher in many different ways. Everyone is a teacher in her own way. This is done by sharing yourself and I do this every day with my friends, my husband, and especially with my children. You do not need a degree for this but I am so happy I will have one.

We are all teachers: it is a primary characteristic of being human. We do it all the time, whether we are conscious of it or not. (Cajete, 1994, p. 73)

I look back on my internship with a sense of relief and accomplishment but also with a touch of anxiety. Much of the sixteen weeks are a blur so I can see the importance of reflection in order to make sense of it all - to make meaning of the experience for myself. It was like living in a different time and space. My whole life seemed to change as well as for my children. School and assignments became my priority over the household and family. "It was only for four months," I told myself.

The four months have now passed and although my family and household have returned to a more routine structure, I remain a changed person. I was fortunate enough to have a 'bad' experience and a 'good' experience. I emphasize the words 'good' and 'bad' because they are not literal terms. Good comes out of the bad and bad comes out of the good. I could write on and on about the effects internship has had on me but I will stick to some of the main things I have learned about the profession of teaching and how I see myself fitting into it as a result. Throughout my internship I have been confronted with aspects of professionalism, educational politics and my own personal teaching philosophy. I have, sincerely, learned so much.

As I reflect on my internship most of my memories are happy ones. I fell in love with the children. They all became a part of me. I hadn't realized how much you learn from children. They are so innocent,

creative, trusting, forgiving and loving. These are characteristics that adults sometimes forget. The students have rewarded me with many things. They have helped me grow and come back to the reality of my goals. We tend to get so wrapped up in the academics that we sometimes forget why we are here. This is something I loved about SUNTEP. We were given the opportunity, every year, to go into the classroom - a little reminder of why we are doing what we are doing.

I now realize how crucial the first three years of the program are in relation to the internship. Those years assist the beginning teacher to transform their personality to fit the teaching world. As I reflect, I begin to realize the stages that I have gone through to become the facilitator I am today. I believe the first year was to find the child inside of yourself! In the teaching world, we definitely need that. In our second year, we get the feeling of hard work and dedication. As beginning teachers, can we handle the pressure coming our way? As third year students, again we go into the field to work hands on with the students and realize the delicacies and uniqueness of each child. We learn the responsibility of engaging students to learn and of assisting students to value and balance their lives at home and school. In the internship, we must bring all of these strategies together. We are what we teach our children. The lives that are touched by us become a part of our lives forever. The children we meet in studying our profession, they are our children at heart.

Basic education [is] not separated from the natural, social, or spiritual aspects of everyday life. Living and learning [are] fully integrated. (Cajete, 1994, p. 33)

Teaching is not all fun, love and laughter every day of your teaching career. In your internship you come to this realization. School is definitely a place where everybody learns and where everyone gets to know one another on a personal basis. The students in the classroom are people of the community, and have important lives of their own. The unfortunate incidents that happen to some children are the one's you come to learn the most from. It is a tough profession to be involved in. You are not only teaching the students; you are there to help them function and make sense of their world. I really believe the saying, "It takes a community to raise a child!" I believe that if we want our children to be confident and successful in their lives, we need the community to enforce togetherness and unity. Our children are very smart these days and we cannot let time pass us by. We, as teachers, must work extra hard to engage our students in school. The experience must be meaningful.

I have learned that when teaching, I am no longer just responsible to myself; rather, my priority lies with the students. I found myself constantly thinking about them and even when I felt burnt out and tired, I still tried to find the best way to plan and do a lesson. I knew I would not

only be cheating myself but the students as well. This feeling and/or belief motivated me immensely.

In chapter one of my teaching autobiography, I stated that as educators our goal must be to help our students travel on the path they are meant to travel and become the people they are meant to be. This is a lofty goal and many would say it is unattainable. It is true we will never possess a magic wand that will eradicate all the ills of our society, but after experiencing many of the realities of everyday life as teacher I continue to believe that it is neither naive, nor unrealistic to see this goal as achievable. Reflecting on the events and experiences of my internship and revisiting chapter one of my teaching autobiography has not only reinforced my belief that this is an attainable goal, but also stressed the importance of reflection on my own journey towards the person I am meant to be and the teacher I want to be.

Before exploring who I am as a teacher, I believe it is important to reflect on my thoughts surrounding what makes a good teacher because this is the teacher I want to be. In the early stages of internship your focus is so far removed from the essence of teaching or what I see as the essential qualities of a good teacher. You are consumed with the components and mechanics of lesson plans. Teaching simply becomes an overwhelming mass of methods, strategies, skills and paper work.

Your entire focus centres on your ability to meet and master the professional targets outlined by the university in the internship manual. Your skills are at the centre of teaching and the students and their needs are somewhere on the periphery. This stage of the internship was difficult for me because 'the teacher I want to be' sees the students and their needs at the centre of teaching. I struggled to see the value in all the hoops that we were forced to jump through during internship. However, over time I have come to place value on these skills.

Knowing, mastering and internalizing these skills is important because in my experience it is when this aspect of teaching becomes natural and a part of who you are as a teacher that you are capable of successfully shifting the focus of teaching from yourself to the kids. I see a good teacher as the teacher who believes that the focus of teaching must be on the kids, their lives, their needs and their experiences. It is at this point where the essence of teaching reveals itself. For me, this revelation happened when the classroom became my classroom. In that instant, teaching became all that I dreamed it could be and man, was it frightening. I felt overwhelmed, inadequate and so privileged.

Overwhelmed because of the awesome responsibility. Inadequate because I am continually struggling to be the person I am meant to be. So how would I ever be able to help the kids realize this goal? And privileged for many reasons. Reasons which play out everyday in the

classroom.

What does the story of this experience tell about 'the teacher I want to be'? I hope it tells that although the education system may determine the competency of a teacher by his/her ability to master a set of tangible skills and present the prescribed curriculum to the students, I do not see this as the only measure of a good teacher. I believe "good" teachers place the students at the centre of their teaching, and to do this, they must go beyond the mastering of skills and meeting curriculum guidelines.

Perhaps what I believe to be one of the better descriptions of a good teacher can be found in a discussion I had with my mom (one of my best teachers). My mom, who is always my biggest fan, continually says how proud she is that I am such a good teacher. However, she is also a bit prejudiced when it comes to her children and their accomplishments. For this reason, I take her comments with a grain of salt and did not realize until I asked her to describe a good teacher what a profound compliment she was giving me. When asked, she explained that good teachers see what they do as worthwhile, they believe they can make a difference and most importantly they believe that the kids they teach will someday make a difference. I responded by asking what she meant by "make a difference". She paused for a moment and then explained that she did not mean that to make a difference you must find a cure for cancer or end world poverty, although both of those accomplishments

would make this world a better place. In her opinion, a difference means becoming a caring, competent parent, a trusted friend and an open-minded, kind person.

Our discussion continued after a few moments of silence when my mom asked, "So what do you think a good teacher is?" I replied, "I agree with you, a good teacher must hold those values, but there is more to it". I believe a good teacher must show her students that each one of them is terribly important to her and by doing this her students may come to see themselves as important to this world. She must help her students to see themselves as having the potential to do anything. A good teacher would also help her students find the tools which would allow them to live the lives that they envision for themselves productively, creatively and passionately. Our conversation ended with my mom's response, "See my girl, you do have the qualities of a good teacher".

Community is the context in which the affective dimension of education unfolds. It is the place where one comes to know what it is to be related... . It is the place of teaching, learning ... the place where each person can ... become complete and express the fullness of their life. (Cajete, 1994, p. 10)

So, who am I as a teacher? Well, I'm the teacher who at times was driven by the curriculum, who fought with a teacher's worst enemy 'time', and who failed the kids more times than she would like to admit. I am also

the teacher who made her classroom a safe place, who came to truly know her students and taught her students to think for themselves at least some of the time. And I am the teacher who learned so much during her internship. I believe this fact summarizes who I am as a teacher: as a teacher I am a learner.

The career of teaching will require a whole new lifestyle for myself. Teaching and the profession will be the centre of my life with everything else being planned and revolving around it. Internship seems to be a realm between being a student and becoming a teacher. I was expected to be a teacher but without a voice as to the kind of teacher I wanted to become.

I found this when confronted with system politics after requesting a meeting with the college supervisor. I was considering withdrawing from the internship because my co-op told me she could not pass me with a clear conscience regarding my management skills. I was hoping I would be able to speak my thoughts about the placement I was in and my concerns regarding my co-operating teacher's expectations of me. When I arrived the morning of the meeting, both the college supervisor and my cooperating teacher were there and the forms for my withdrawal were complete, ready for my signature. I was not consulted at all!

This is when I learned a lot about professionalism. I spoke from my

head and not from my heart. Later the supervisor spoke to me about this event, how he had not wanted to withdraw me and how much effort he put into finding me a new placement to the point of putting his job on the line. I just smiled because I knew the other side of this story. I do very much appreciate all he had done but I wish he would have verbalized 'why' he had done it.

When I think back, I know my co-op thought she was doing the right thing. She had a method of teaching and management that worked for her in the sixteen years she taught. She was merely trying to pass this knowledge on to me. I couldn't seem to become the same type of teacher as her. I tried, but when I did, the kids did not respond to me in the same way they did for her. This did not go over well. With my second co-op, I was given the freedom to do my own thing, be myself. Here I was successful with no complaints about my classroom management skills.

Through all of this, I found out so much about what kind of a teacher I am and about what kind of teacher I am not. I just wish I could have had the chance to be myself in that classroom, then I would know whether or not I could teach that grade. At this point, I feel I could. I do not believe you 'must' have an authoritarian type of discipline with teenagers. I feel I can be a friend, be honest, be open and love a student no matter how old or what grade they are in. I didn't get the chance to prove this to myself.

Indigenous thinking honors the reality that there are always two sides to the two sides. There are realities and realities. Learning how they interact is real understanding. (Cajete, 1994, p. 31)

The various methodologies, as outlined by our 'Bible' (the Internship Manual), didn't pose any real difficulties for me. Planning, both individual lessons and units, presenting, questioning and responding, personal and professional attributes, and classroom management were always utmost in my mind, but I do not feel that this is an area in which I learned the most as many of these methodologies were already in place. For me, those were the basic 'hoops I had to jump through' on the way to greater things. These greater things include: meeting the needs of the students, emotionally and physically; really getting to know the students and their likes and dislikes; constantly juggling time; becoming more familiar with evaluation and assessment; and learning who I am as a teacher and the qualities that effective teachers must demonstrate and begin to internalize. Reflection is always utmost in the minds of effective teachers. In order to be and remain effective it is imperative that teachers reflect on themselves as educators and the impact and influences they have on the students whose lives they touch.

Students come to school with a variety of different needs. These are as differential as the students themselves. I believe that this is one of

the most difficult aspects of teaching and one that you can never say you have mastered because you rarely have the same students for more than one year. Each new school year represents another variance in the needs of the students. However, I do believe that teachers can begin to assess the needs of the students early in the school year by observing interactions that go on between the students throughout the school day. While working in cooperative groups, interacting in the gymnasium, playing at recess or noon hour, eating their lunches and simply interacting throughout the school day, students provide teachers ample opportunity to observe and make some assessment as to the needs of each child.

I am not saying that meeting the needs of each student is an easy task once these needs have been identified, but it is much easier to strive toward that goal when you have identified what those needs are, or at least what you think they are. In my classroom I had a very wide variety of students for many different reasons. My students were different due to: ability levels, socio-economic levels, life experiences, culture and age. These are the ones that I identified and probably is not an inclusive list. One of the greatest tasks, as a teacher, is to identify each of these differences and to attempt to include in lessons and units specific objectives and activities that validate each of them and the lives of the students whenever and wherever possible. It is only in this way that the students will see these differences as acceptable and regard themselves

and who they are as significant and worthy.

Building a relationship of trust with students is the foundation on which teaching lies. Providing students the opportunity to really trust their teacher to do as she has said, as well as to demonstrate true caring, goes a long way to developing a good relationship. This trust relationship impacts every area of education from planning to classroom management.

Mitakuye Oyasin, we are all related, we are all Of Community. In engendering an understanding of this fact in the educational structures and processes that we create, we honor what is truly most human in each of us. (Cajete, 1994, p. 165)

I have learned that I need to be prepared and organized, but I have also learned how to do this effectively without driving myself crazy. I have learned that it is crucial to develop a relationship built on trust with students. I have learned that in order to be an effective teacher you really need to know who you are as a person and allow your students to get to know that person. I have learned to allow my students the opportunity to make choices in order to take responsibility for their learning. I have learned that I need to find a balance between cooperative group work and individual study. I have learned that evaluation is just as important as planning and preparation, although I seldom spend as much time on it. I have learned that as an educator you are never alone, there is always

someone willing to help - all you have to do is ask. I have learned that children are unique individuals who desire love and respect from someone who truly cares. I have learned that many students live very complicated lives and are very 'street smart'. Their learning has to be based in their lives. What is going on in their lives, outside of school, has to be considered when interacting with them and when planning units and lessons. I have learned the importance of continuous critical reflection on your own effectiveness as a teacher. I have learned that there is never enough time, but you make do with what you have by making every minute count.

Overall, I've learned that what works for others won't necessarily work for me and vice versa. I also learned that this is okay because teaching is also about me: how I teach and why I teach. I learned just how much I don't know! But I feel this is a good thing because hopefully I will be open to change and to new ideas. My co-op was an excellent role model in this area. She showed me that I could be a great teacher without being 'perfect'.

Who am I as a teacher? A person who is constantly learning, along with my students, how to create an environment that is warm, inviting to others, and a place where we all feel safe to express ourselves. I, as a teacher, will be the facilitator to create a classroom that is "holistic", meaning that: our learning is always evolving and together we

will challenge ideas to enhance our knowledge of our environment and our world.

I am the person who the kids still want to tell their stories to. Last week, when I stopped in to drop off some material, a young man who had struggled with algebra and who I had spent a great deal of extra time with approached me saying, "I got something really important to tell you. You'll never believe it, but on the last algebra test almost everyone failed but I got 68%. Can you believe it?" This young man had an amazing personality, he was kind, funny and mischievous. Algebra was so removed from his reality, but over time it became important to him that he succeed at it. I am hopeful this feeling comes in some part as a result of my belief that although curriculum demands that students attain a certain level of understanding of algebraic concepts, this is not the only reason for struggling to master algebra. In my classroom, it is as much about the journey towards learning and understanding. This student's struggle has taught him that he can accomplish something that at one time he thought was impossible. And I had the privilege of looking in his eyes, seeing his pride, shaking his hand and saying, "Yes, I can believe it and I am so proud of you". Life is Good.

Touching Spirits - My Reflections

So, who am I as a teacher? I am the teacher who learns from my students every day. Through storytelling, my students recreate the real world and enter into an imaginative world, dreaming into the possibilities of ways to act, and ways to live their lives, as teachers. Storytelling allows me, as the teacher, to imaginatively enter into their world and to dream into the possibilities of new ways to act and new ways to live my life as a teacher. I dream into their dreams.

Each of my students is a unique and special human being with motives and desires of her own. They cannot be me and I cannot be them. As a teacher, I must know humility so that my students have the opportunity to make choices and decisions rooted in their own philosophies that evolve and grow with each new experience. As a teacher, I must have the courage to let my students make mistakes, to sometimes challenge their ideas, and to be open-minded about other ways of knowing and learning. I must have the courage to critically examine my motives and desires and the effects they may have upon others.

Through the writing of their teaching autobiographies, and the telling of personal stories of experience, the pre-interns and interns are empowered by their knowledge of self and how that knowledge affects the lives and thoughts of others. The process of living the story, reflecting on the story and telling the story leads to new and deeper understandings. The story integrates daily

events into a unified whole and determines how each individual acts upon the world.

There are many things we do in my course other than “storytelling”. In one way, it is a very small part of our curriculum. And yet, in many ways it is everything. In the writing of the teaching autobiographies and the sharing of stories, the students bridge past experiences and meanings to reconstruct their present understandings of teaching and learning. Through story, the students integrate the skills, strategies and methods they will need and use to be effective teachers into their ongoing stories of self as teacher. They approach learning to teach within a holistic philosophy as they story about their goals and visions that lead them down the pathway. It is a very long journey as each individual examines her perspectives and philosophy as the foundation of teaching.

For every three-hour class I have with my students, I probably spend three hours thinking about and reflecting on the material that is to be presented. It is a lot of hard work and sometimes it is very frustrating. Who I am as a person and a teacher directly affects the relationship I have with my students and the relationship they have with each other. I have the responsibility to create and maintain an environment in which my students have the freedom to explore their fears, anxieties, concerns, ideas and understandings. I strive to create an environment in which my students feel respected and in which we have a relationship of trust. Part of the giving is in the receiving.

As I enter into the thoughtworld of my students, I think about the importance of weaving together the three curricula I have identified as part of my course. I expect there are others, for as the pre-interns state: every student has her own hidden curriculum. First, in my pedagogy of teaching, I focus on maintaining a sense of family and community (group connectedness). As an instructor in the SUNTEP program, this is my responsibility. We have class meetings once a week to talk about issues and concerns, upcoming events and our role and responsibilities to the SUNTEP community. As the third-year class, one of our responsibilities is to organize the graduation ceremony for the fourth-year students. We plan and do storytelling workshops with the first-year students. This is an opportunity to connect with the new students and to provide leadership in the skills the third-year students have gained in planning and presenting lessons. The students learn from each other and connect with the life of the community. Miller (1988) states that "the focus of holistic education is on relationships" (p.3) and included in this is "the relationship between individual and community" (p.3).

Community involves not only a physical place of great importance but also a place of relationship. According to Cajete (1994), Aboriginal education is "learning about life through participation and relationship in community" (p.26) and "community is the place where the forming of the heart and face of the individual as one of the people is most fully expressed. Community is the

context in which the Indian person comes to know the nature of relationship, responsibility, and participation in the life of one's people" (p. 164). It is "the place through which Indian people express their highest thoughts" (p.165). In contrast, a dominant orientation to education "continues to emphasize objective content and experience detached from primary sources and community" (p. 26). As a program and a community, we have much to live up to. In teaching and in learning to teach, we strive to walk the path where everything and everyone is related. Through community and relationship, we connect with a way of knowing that connects us to each other.

I focus on story as a way of knowing (making meaning), the second curriculum. When planning my lessons, I always ask myself: How can we share the knowledge we have as a group on this particular topic? How do I facilitate the learning of new skills, methods, strategies and theories in ways that will be meaningful? How do I guide my students through the "hoops" so that they can focus on the "greater things"? Storytelling, oral and written, is a way of knowing that integrates experience with knowledge. This way of knowing is holistic in that it explores "the relationship between various domains of knowledge" with "the relationship between self and Self" (Miller, 1988, p. 3).

All this overlaps with my third curriculum, planning in a way that is holistic and that connects with our spiritual centre, "Self". This means taking an inner journey to make meaning with our hearts and our minds - a journey of "touching spirits" that connects with our soul. Cajete (1994) discusses how "there are a

number of elements that characterize Indigenous educational processes” (p. 29). Among these elements Cajete states that, “it recognizes that learning is about seeing the whole through the parts” and that “we learn through our bodies and spirits as much as through our minds” (p. 31). In the writing of their teaching autobiographies, the pre-interns/interns reflect on the parts to make them whole and make meaning deep inside. It is an inner journey and a search to that place where “the soul and intention of the vision are formed” and that place where the “soul of the dream is honoured” (p. 69).

The journey I have taken in writing this thesis, the telling of a story, has helped me to see “the whole through the parts” and to learn “through [my body and spirit] as much as through [my mind]”. Much of what I know is what I feel and these feelings lead me to the ways I interpret and tell the story. It is a subjective experience and a subjective way of knowing. It reaches into my subconscious and opens up my intuition and imagination to create new ways of teaching and new ways of being in a better relationship with my students and my world.

In the act of telling the story, I decide what to include and what to leave out. This process imposes structure and meaning on the event as a whole. In the act of telling and reflecting on the story, I have come to see classrooms as places where teachers and students live together and grow together. As teachers and students, we feed the others’ spirits. I know this to be true here at

SUNTEP and I see it in the experiences of my students as they tell and retell their stories of meaning.

Story. On the surface it appears to be a rather simple concept. We all know that a story has a beginning, a middle and an end. A story has characters, a setting and a plot. It usually involves some kind of predicament, a conflict or a struggle which will be resolved to some degree or other. We would usually say that we learn something from a story. But in my journey to understand story as a way of knowing, making meaning and expressing knowledge, the concept has become very complex.

Story represents the ability to have a vision, a passion and a voice. Story, in my mind (or perhaps more accurately in my heart and in my soul) represents the living of life and the search to understand and make meaning of life (my spirit). Story is my way of knowing that connects with my experiences and the experiences of others - being in relationship with self and other. In my search to understand story as a way of knowing, I fell (or wandered) from the path many times. In the getting lost, I came to realize that there are many ways to story about story. This pathway and my search will continue long after the writing of this thesis is complete. In my story, and the stories of my students, we stand alone and we stand together - interconnected "like the fibers of a Navajo rug" (Pierce & Gilles, 1993, p. ix).

Story. . .

kind of like the wind on a very calm day

kind of like six foot waves pounding on the shore

Story . . .

like the missing cloud on a really sunny day

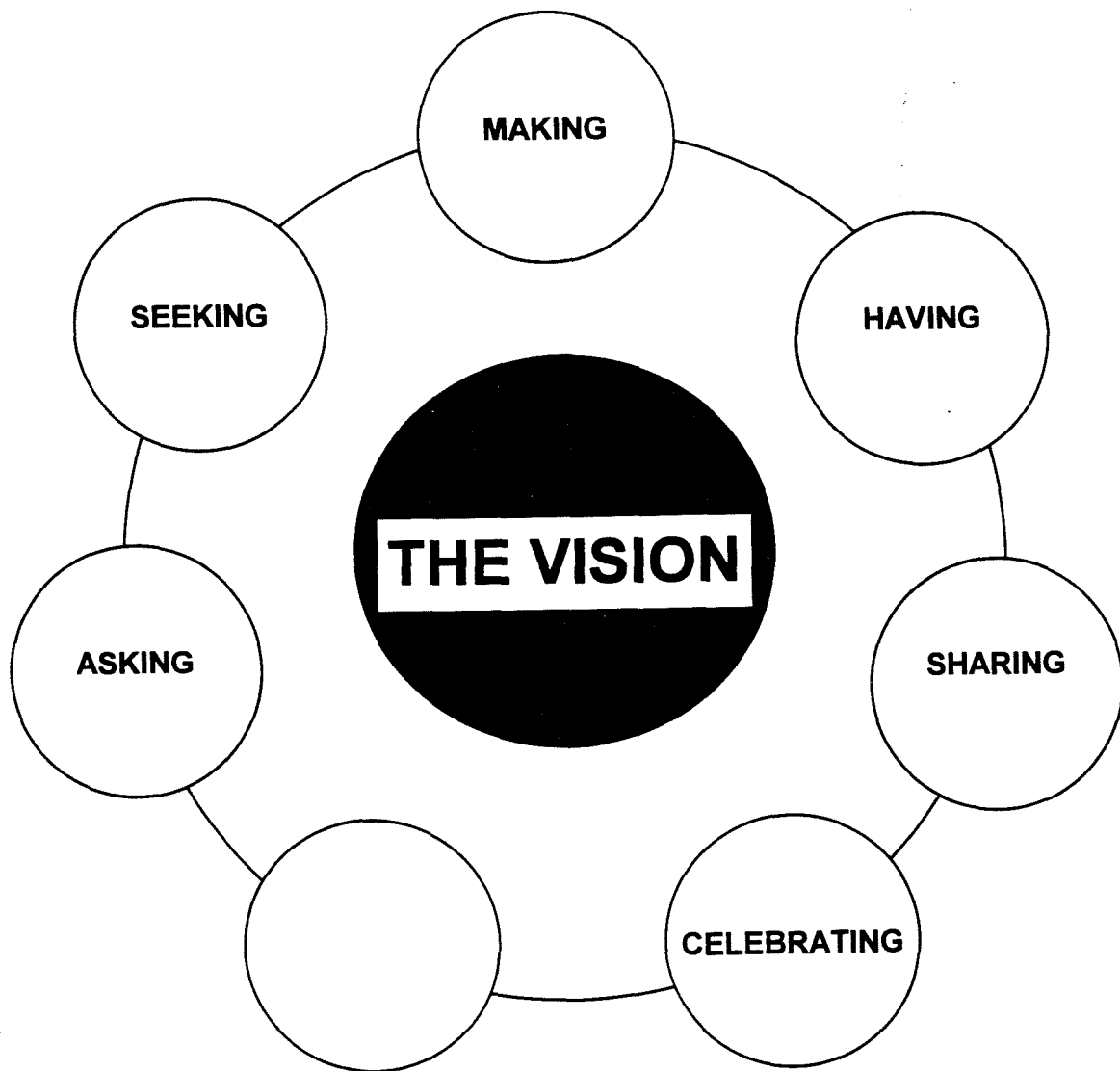
like the feel of sun as it softly touches down

Story

the taste of the earth on your feet,

the spirit running free

The Connected Rings of Indigenous Visioning



Celebrating . . . is an individual and communal process that celebrates the mystery of life and the journey that each of us takes. Celebrating is a way of spreading the light around. (Cajete, 1994, p. 73)

Chapter Seven

Stories and Dreams

[l]earners need to see, feel and visualize a teaching through their own and other people's perspectives. Therefore, telling and retelling a story from various perspectives and at various stages of life enrich[es] learning, emphasiz[es] key thoughts, and mirror[s] ideas, attitudes, or perspectives back to the learners for impact. ... "Every story is retold in a new day's light". (Cajete, 1994, p. 212)

Being a graduate student, and writing this thesis, has been a long journey of discovery and meaning-making. I begin to feel that I "little bit know something". There were many moments, after reading and rereading the literature for this research project, I looked to my partner and asked, "How do they know all of this?" The more I read and the more I talked to friends and colleagues, the more I continued to think, "I really don't know anything", and "How will I ever have the authority to speak with intelligence about my topic?" And the biggest fear of all . . . that I not disappoint my students (the participants in this study). Their voices and stories are integral to this journey. I must honour their dignity and celebrate the pathway of their learning. Through story, the pre-interns and interns make meaning of a series of events and put them into

a structured whole. The stories unfold, overlap and create the patterns we call meanings. The collective narratives, that I have written from their stories, celebrate the journey each one of them has taken in learning to be a teacher.

There were many moments while thinking about and writing this thesis that I thought I had lost my direction, or perhaps that I didn't have a direction at all. I was often paralyzed in my ability to put words to pages. I doubted my own voice and my ability to speak from the heart. I doubted, doubted, doubted. . . but my passion to do it my way would not let go.

Then there were moments like this . . .

It is one of those late nights I have been working at the SUNTEP Centre on my thesis. I'm tired, really tired! As I pack up my bags to leave, I question whether I have accomplished anything and I question the significance of my work. I drag my body and battered brain out to my car and begin the twenty-mile journey down the highway to my retreat in the Nisbet Forest. The radio, tuned to CBC, is softly playing but I'm lost in my thoughts, lost inside my head (again!). I try to stop the hurricane of ideas going through my mind when suddenly the word "story" catches my ear. (Stories are everywhere!) I hear a gentle voice, soft background music, and I'm slowly drawn into the storytelling I hear on the radio. Palliative care givers are sharing stories about their experiences with those who are preparing to die. The storytellers share the reasons they do what they do. The question is asked: Why would anyone want to spend all of his or her time

with those who are dying?

Like the stories I heard from the Elders, words ring in my heart. The storyteller says, “We do not know life fully until we have embraced death” . . . I think about my thesis. I hear the storyteller saying that what she does is not about death, it is about living. I listen intently as this storyteller shares three important lessons she has learned from her patients. They teach her about the importance of relationship with others; her patients “gift” her with their stories, and she learns about the richness of their lives and their wisdom; and her patients teach her about respect for the human spirit.

I can hardly wait to get home and share this with my partner. I have just heard the story of my thesis! The mystery of the human spirit interconnects with the minds and the hearts of others and is the pathway to my Centre “where the soul of the dream is honoured”.

The process of writing this story (with Cajete’s *Connected Rings of Indigenous Visioning* as my pathway) has allowed me to experience a “creative flow of thought . . . a sense of direction . . . and awakened [me] to the life of [my] own soul” (p. 70). When I felt like I was losing my way, I remembered the pathway to the Center is a journey of living and learning: of being in relationship with self, others and the world, of learning through the gift of story, and of respecting the spirit within each of us. It is a spiritual journey. I remember the words of my friend: “But you have a story, a grand story” and I continue on my

journey.

There are many ways the stories of my students have been a valuable source of knowledge for me. Inside, with my inner voice, I listen for the meaning. I think about the children who will be under their care in many classrooms and in many schools. I think about the stories of the children. They will be a valuable source of knowledge as the pre-interns and interns make their way into the world of teaching. The children will teach them, like they have taught me, about the importance of a relationship of trust and respect. And about the importance of courage, humility and compassion. The children will teach them about better ways to be and act in this world. They will teach them - when they listen to their stories. As teachers and students, they will create a family and a community where they will be in relationship, learn from the gift of story and respect the spirit that moves and creates each individual and unique human being. My students all have a "grand story" as they journey to the Center. They "come to the end of this particular path" with stories of experience to carry them on in their journey of learning to teach:

I am nearly finished this part of my journey. I come to the end of this particular path. I near my home as I near the end of the path. I stop to notice the silence and the peacefulness. I bow my head in silence and notice that the path is not straight. It has curves and bends but this time I feel more at ease. I feel comfortable because I am part of this path now.

I continue to take my small steps towards my home and the path lightens with a sparkling aura. It is millions of sparkling diamond snowflakes shining in the snow, lighting my way. They offer me help and I humbly accept it. I pass the spot where I had fallen earlier. My imprint is still there. I look at it for a moment and reminisce the memories I will treasure always. Good and bad memories, all learning memories, all memories with many stories and questions behind them. Many memories that will remain a mystery and many memories that will not.

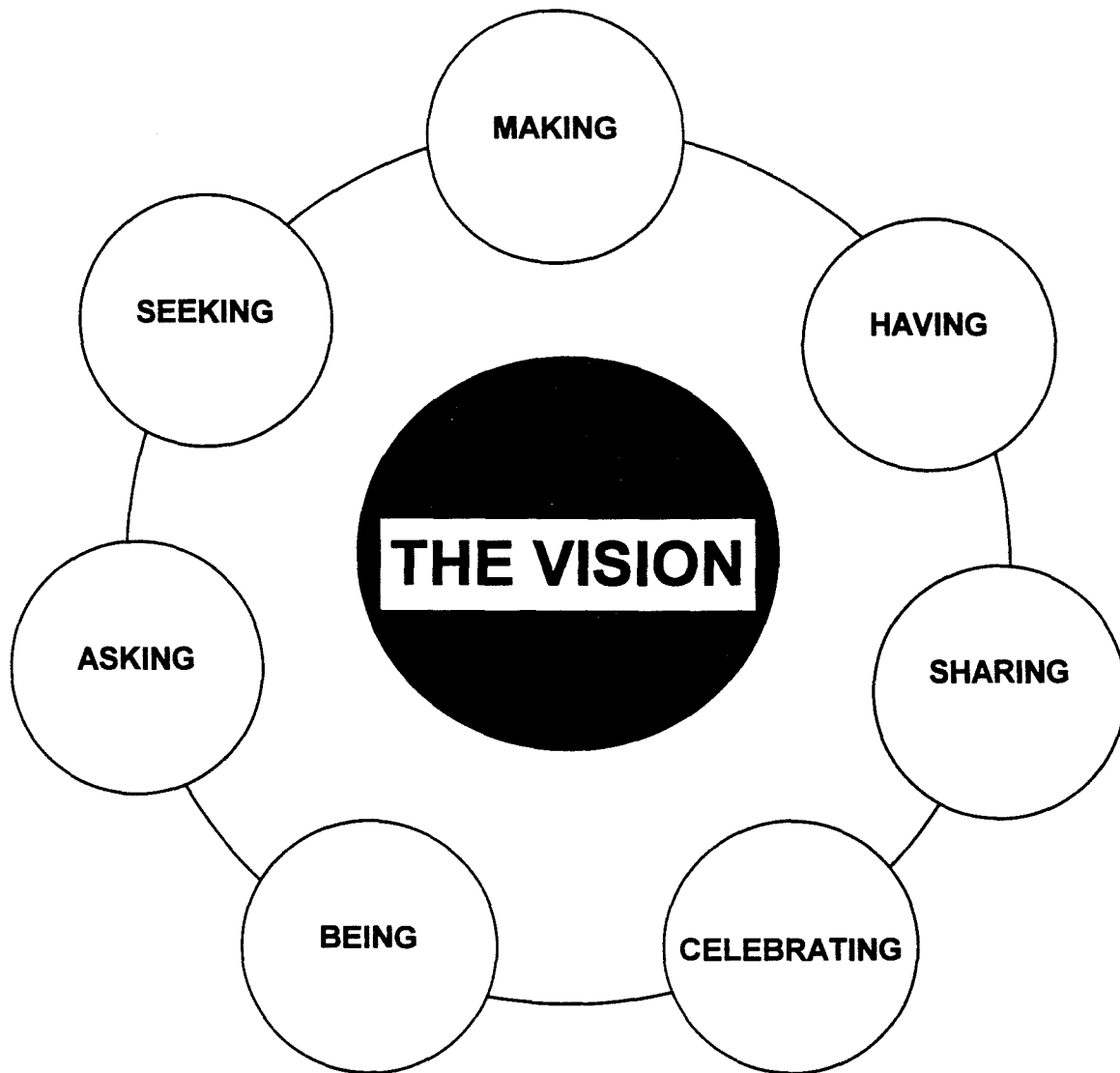
As I stand before my fallen imprint I reach into my blouse breast pocket. I look for the list so I can re-examine my teaching experience from a different perspective. The list is not there. I look around to see if it has fallen out. I look through the fallen snow. The snow is warm as I lift thousands of snowflakes looking for my list. It is then that it happens. The snow begins to sparkle even more. The snow shines as bright as the sun and the path widens. I immediately lean back and immerse myself in the luxurious bed of shining snow. I feel warm and comfortable. As I lay in the snow, I remember what it feels like to be a kid again. I feel the snowflakes move my arms and legs and I let the movement of my body create a snow angel. A beautiful, unique snow angel. As I lay there resting, happy, I feel the list. I feel the list inside my warm body. The list is a part of me. It is inside myself, imbedded in my heart.

This thesis is just one story in a lifetime of learning. No more, no less.

This is just one of many stories from the community of SUNTEP. The faculty and students gift each other with their stories every day and I am touched by the magic. The focus of this study has been on my course and my relationship with my students, but the pre-interns and interns have taken many other courses and had many other relationships with faculty and students in their journey of learning to teach. It is with the greatest humility that I offer this story as a small step in the journey.

Our experiences are, and will be, different from yours. My story, my students' stories, and your story will create a new communal story and another way of knowing. It is a mystery. "Dream into our dreams" and make your own dreams as you travel to the Center. Celebrate the mystery of life and the human spirit that moves you.

The Connected Rings of Indigenous Visioning



***Being** ... joyous, thankful, reflective of the gifts of life and vision are important states of mind. They open us to the illumination of the Centering place, the place where our soul and spirit reside. (Cajete, 1994, p. 73)*

Chapter Eight

Inside the Music

Among my people, questions are often answered with stories. The first story almost always evokes another, which summons another, until the answer to the question has become several stories long. (Estes, 1993, p. 1)

I am Sandy, a non-Aboriginal teacher in an Aboriginal teacher education program. I am thankful every day for the stories I receive, stories that form and inform me as an individual and as a member of the SUNTEP community. As I walk toward the Centering place, “the place where our soul and spirit reside” (Cajete, p. 73), I am thankful for the gift of story my students have given to me. In the writing of their teaching autobiographies and in our sharing circles, we have become connected to each other. “Through interaction with their stories [my] own stories were more fully revealed to [me]” (Schubert, 1991, p. 223). In the writing of this thesis, I place my heart in the centre and share our stories of experience in my journey toward self-awareness and my journey to heal and make meaning. My journey of learning has become many stories long. As in any storytelling session, one story always leads to another . . . “until the answer to the question has become several stories long” (Estes, p. 1). I listen for the

meaning.

My passion to make my learning meaningful and to trust my intuition has opened the pathway to my soul's center. I listen to my inner voice, where my soul resides, and make meaning by reflecting on my experiences and the experiences of my students. Through story, I connect my heart and my mind with others and experience wholeness, a spiritual way of being. Brody,

Witherell, Donald & Lundblad (1991) say this about life stories:

In the sharing of life stories ... we come closer to understanding the "other" as ourselves, to imagining "the familiar hearts of strangers" (Ozick, 1986, p.65). ... It has been a remarkable journey. (p. 277)

I am joyous that my spirit has been my guide and joined my worlds of thought and feeling. Story connects my emotional and spiritual path of living and learning.

The process of studying for and writing this thesis has helped me to understand myself as a human being. I understand the importance of claiming my own voice and speaking from the authority of my own experience. As I access my stories, and reflect on the collective stories of my students, I gain the knowledge of how relationship weaves a fine tapestry of my being human, a woman and a teacher. These are not separate identities. My stories and my students' stories, as a form of knowledge, connect us to each other in a relationship that has no cultural boundaries. We honour and participate in each other's stories as part of the process of being human. In speaking about the

Dunne-za people, Ridington (1990) argues,

a person who speaks from the authority of his or her own experience “little bit know something.” Knowledge, the elders say, empowers a person to live in this world with intelligence and understanding. They recognize that knowledge is a distinctively human attribute. They recognize knowledge as a form of power. (p. xv)

I have come to understand how every culture has stories that inform its people about who they are and from where they came; and every culture has its stories that teach about the good way to live one’s life. My history, which in many ways forms my humanness, has been passed on to me through story (as with all cultures). The knowledge I gain by listening to, and reflecting on the stories of my family, inform me about how to act and be in this world. As a family and as a community, we honour and participate in each other’s stories as a way of belonging and a way of being in relationship.

Story has helped me connect my human qualities with the qualities I have as a woman. There was a time, not so very long ago, when I felt I must hide from others the attributes I possess which are associated with being female. I believed that if I expressed my ideas from my heart, if I revealed my past history (I loved playing with my dolls . . .), if I revealed I liked the colour pink, if I preferred washing the kitchen floor to fixing my car . . . I would be scorned as being an anti-feminist. I would be working against the injustice and inequality many women are fighting to change. I felt a close connection to women and to the lack of validation and acceptance of our characteristic way of knowing. By

reclaiming my voice and my stories, and by reflecting on the stories given to me by my students, I am now thankful for any qualities and attributes I might possess that are associated with women. I am thankful for being human. Witherell and Noddings (1991) have helped me to appreciate how “stories ... join the worlds of thought and feeling, and they give a special voice to the feminine side of human experience - to the power of emotion, intuition, and relationships in human lives” (p. 4). I am joyous of my human qualities that celebrate knowing as emotional and spiritual, knowing as intuitive, and knowing as being in relationship with others. I rise in the morning to celebrate the pink of the sunrise and watch its pink wings spread across the sky, fading into a pink sunset that will rise again to another pink day! I am thankful for this healing.

Story has helped me make connections among the qualities of being human, a woman and a teacher. I have learned that teaching is a creative exploration of human relationships and an exploration of ways to provide “caring and continuity for students” (Noddings, 1992, p. 14). Story weaves together a rich tapestry of interconnected threads and helps me understand how there is much more to teaching and learning than methods, strategies and skills. Hare (1993) states:

Our primary interest should not be in particular strategies, methods, techniques and approaches. These are fashionable for a time only to be replaced by other practices, so we need to look for individuals who can intelligently review new ideas which come along. ... Our notion of the “good teacher” needs to shift from superficial, behavioral criteria to more fundamental human excellences. ... We need teachers ... who are genuinely interested

in and concerned about the well-being of their students, but are at the same time passionately committed to the subjects they teach; teachers who are able to weigh the complex factors which enter into the particular decisions which face them, but who are capable of stepping outside the boundaries set by present realities. (p. 161-162)

We can not separate what we learn from who we are in our journey of learning, our journey to the Centering place. As we learn to teach, we are constantly making decisions. As teachers we are always learners. The pre-interns and interns speak from the authority of their inner voice and allow me to speak from the authority of my inner voice, to share with them in the creation of knowledge. Noddings (1992) suggests, "who the teacher is, who the students are, what they are trying to accomplish separately and together all matter in designing instruction" (p. 8). Knowing each other on the inside opens the possibilities for making choices and decisions in designing instruction and curriculum that will meet the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual needs of teacher and learner. We come to know each other on the inside when we share our stories of experience as way of knowing and a way of being.

With story as praxis, we create a curriculum that is inclusive of many voices. We examine our beliefs, perspectives and ways of looking at the world so that we can better understand the beliefs, perspectives and world view of others. Story, as praxis, gives voice to cultural ways of knowing, to women's ways of knowing and to the human side of knowing. We join together in our

humanness. There are many ways to communicate and many ways to gain knowledge. Witherell & Noddings (1991) suggest, for those of us who educate there are many paradoxes.

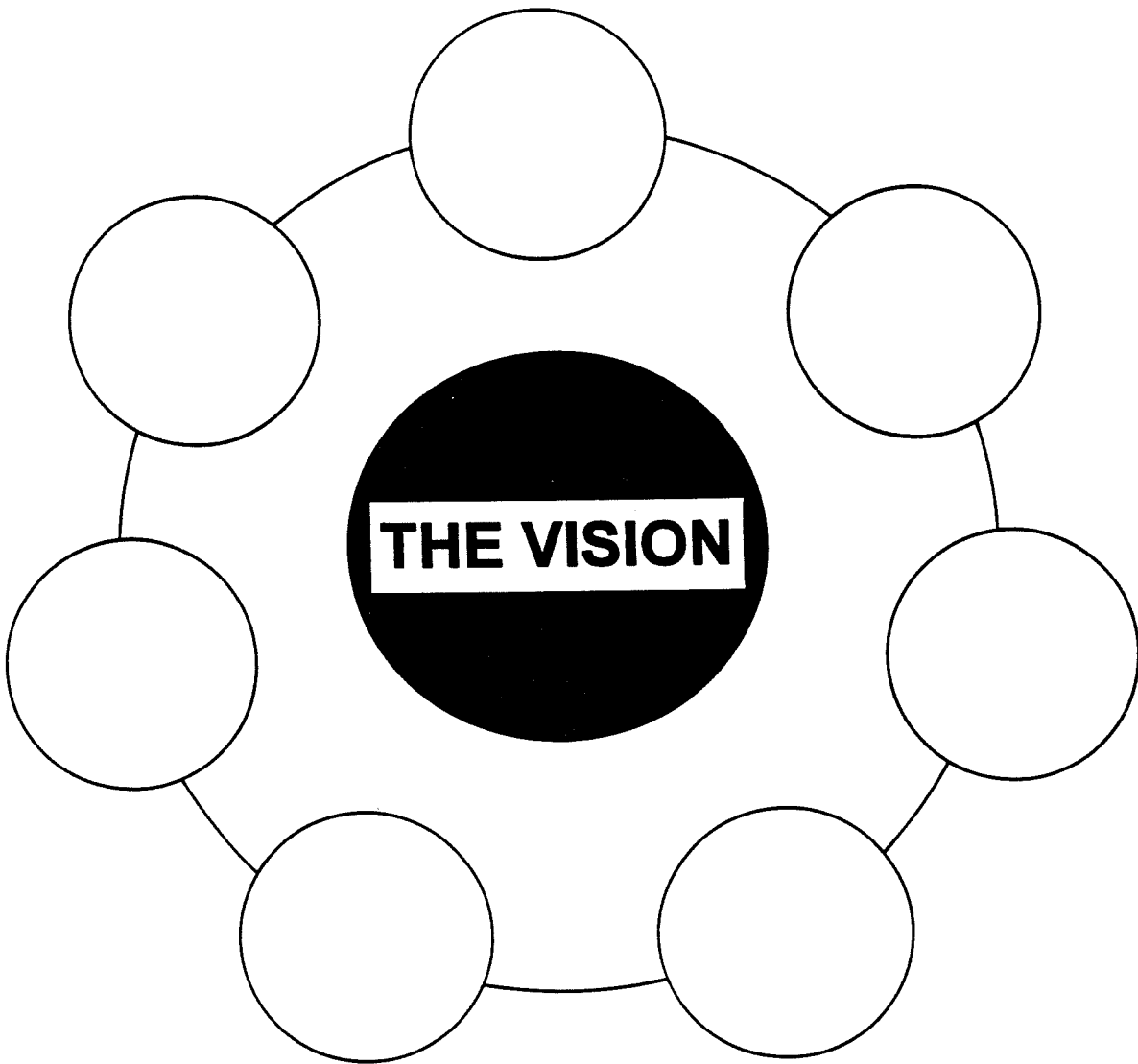
As with any paradox, what appears to be contradictory or oppositional is in some central sense compatible. Teaching is both a public and a private activity. It calls on both narrative and analytic ways of knowing. It invites a quest for both the general and the particular. Teaching can deepen our understanding of and respect for both persons and communities in ways that render the familiar strange and the strange familiar. ... The act of teaching calls us to live in the worlds of actuality and of possibility and vision. It asks us to see clearly and attentively and at the same time acknowledge Edmund Burke's maxim that a particular way of seeing is also a way of not seeing. (p. 9)

Perhaps if we open up the possibilities and imagine "what If?", we might walk towards a world of understanding, caring, love, peace, harmony and hope. We might walk towards the Centering place and embrace the ideal

MITAKUYE OYASIN, "WE ARE ALL RELATED"
(Cajete, 1994, p. 164)

... if we dream into the music.

The Connected Rings of Indigenous Visioning



This is the place where the “soul of the dream is honored”. The intention is energized and guided by one’s innermost conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings. (Cajete, 1994, p. 71)

Chapter Nine

A Dance of Meaning

We walk infinite paths and talk in infinite ways about getting to the Center every day of our lives. This has been going on in every generation of every culture of mankind since the first words were spoken and the first images were constructed. It is a very, very, long human quest! (Cajete, 1994, p. 73)

I am Sandra Emma Sherwin-Shields, a daughter, a sister, a wife, a mother, a friend, a teacher and a learner. I am me. As I connect with the spirit of my Grandmother, I become interconnected with the mystery of life and being. I come to know and understand the spiritual relationship of learning through love and humility. I come to know and understand the importance of caring for our environment - all living and non-living things. The spirit of my Grandmother is a gift of life and energy and a gift of story that guides me through her knowledge and her wisdom. My spirit, Emma, connects me to the cosmos and the act of being in a relationship of peace and harmony with the world around me. My soul listens to the music; my spirit dances to the meaning.

My story, this text, is a community of stories. I cannot separate myself from all of my relations, "I AM, BECAUSE WE ARE" (Witherell, 1991, p. 94). My

story resides in my Centering Place, my spiritual centre. That is why learning is always a process of healing, a process of “learning something about ourselves” (Cajete, 1994, p. 70).

In this thesis, I offer my interpretations of spirituality and in no way mean to represent or teach about Aboriginal spirituality. I have worked with Aboriginal people for twenty-five years and I only “little bit know something”. But we live in a world that is dominated by a world-view that is in constant collision with an Aboriginal view of the world - a world in which everything is interconnected and everyone is related. My journey is deeply affected by my relationships with Aboriginal people and the belief that, “we share with Native people a common desire to live healthy, love-filled and peaceful lives” (Ross, 1992, p. xxii). This is my journey of “hope” that, if we as teachers listen to the stories of our students, we will honour, respect, and learn from their ways of knowing. Ways of knowing, that may be different from our own, but without a doubt, are no less sophisticated. As Ross suggests, “there is much of value in [Aboriginal] notions of proper way to relate to each other, to the universe and to oneself. How those notions might require translation to become effectively integrated into our urban, technological and bureaucratic world may well be our challenge to straighten out” (p. 187). I turn inward to make meaning with my mind, my heart and my soul of the “infinite paths and ... the infinite ways” of “getting to the Centre”.

I understand story in a way that has been extremely difficult to articulate.

But the struggle has taken me to new places. I “listen” in ways I know I was not capable of before writing this thesis. I have spent countless hours very late in the evening when the house had gone to sleep, sitting in the darkness of my living room staring out into the starry night. (My family laughingly says, “If Mom is sitting in her rocker in the dark living room, don’t talk to her”!) In the darkness, I can be with the night. I sit and tell myself countless stories, replaying events and experiences from long ago, the present and into the future. I sit in the silence and dream about the “what if’s”? I relive my childhood, my children’s childhood and the childhoods of the future. I am not sure, at this moment, what all of this might mean. I will make new meanings long after the process of writing this thesis. Stories are like that.

And so, why is life-story and personal narrative central to pedagogy in teacher education? What have I learned from the process of restorying the stories of my students and restorying my stories of experience? What have I learned about relationship? I have learned that through the telling of their personal stories of experience, the pre-interns negotiate for new meanings of what it means to teach. They negotiate for new meanings of the qualities they hope to possess as teachers. They think and reflect on how they will act as teachers. Carter & Doyle (1995) state, “teaching and learning to teach are deeply personal matters connected to one’s identity and, thus, to one’s life story” (p. 186). Through storytelling, written and oral, the pre-interns were provided

with a holistic framework to make choices and decisions that are embedded in their relationship with self, others and the world - their relationship with teaching and learning. The collective narratives of my students provide an example of storytelling as pedagogy in learning to teach that is deeply personal and often full of risks. The voices of my students are powerful and I am humbled by their messages.

Through personal narrative, I have discovered the power and importance of listening to and reflecting on the stories of my students as a holistic way of understanding what I do as a teacher. I have discovered the power and importance of "Relationship" in learning to teach. The pre-interns journey of learning is embedded in who they are as people and I must honour this through our relationship. They provide me with the knowledge I need to provide them with a safe and caring environment. My pre-interns teach me about who I want to be in my evolving self-image as a teacher. I learn from them every day. Connelly & Clandinin (1990) state that through narratives of experience, students negotiate for new meanings of what it means to teach. Through "our" collective narratives, I negotiate for new meanings of what it means to teach. In the telling and receiving of stories, "we learn something essentially human by understanding an actual life or community as lived" (p. 8). Teaching is a personal journey of discovery and a life-long activity (Carter & Doyle, 1995). Our life stories empower us to make meaning of our experiences and thus gain knowledge. Learning is a spiritual journey as we search for meaning through

our hearts, our minds and our souls.

Cajete's *Connected Rings of Indigenous Visioning* has been the pathway of this journey. My search to understand the meanings my students and I make of learning to teach began by turning inward and "seeking something [my] inner being truly desir[ed]" (p. 70). The Connected Rings allowed me to explore the spiritual nature of learning by following a path that was deeply personal and a path that began and ended in the Centre. The stories I have received are precious gifts and I have gained the knowledge and the courage, through the process of questing, to act in new ways as a teacher. Education is "Relationship". The pre-interns have given me a "grand story", a story of passion and vision. The pre-interns have changed through time and I have changed in ways I do not yet fully understand. Our intuition, imagination and dreams move our spirits so that together we will create a dance of meaning. We will have new visions and new stories. There will be new paths to follow. Learning to teach "is a very, very, long human quest!" (p. 73).

Circles and stories. Stories and circles. Elders, great grandparents, grandparents, parents, children and their children. Overlapping, interconnecting, creating magic, new stories, new circles. Perhaps this is the meaning.

I remember being scolded by my daughter's grade one and two teacher. Her grandparents were coming to visit for the week-end and would be arriving

Thursday evening. When I informed the teacher I would be keeping Brandi home on Friday to visit with her grandparents, her teacher stated he had never known a student who missed as many days as our daughter to be with her grandparents (three or four days a year). Our parents and their parents gift our children with their spirit through their stories so that they will create a new dance of meaning. This *is* our children's education.

As a human being, a woman, a mother, a teacher and a learner, I wish for all children the same things I wish for my children. A future in which they all have a "grand story". And a future in which they are free to live their "visions" in their spiritual journey of learning. I end my thesis with a question because "questions are often answered with stories ... until the answer to the question has become several stories long" (Estes, 1993, p. 1). Can education for **ALL OF OUR CHILDREN** be a "**GRAND STORY**", a story of "**TOUCHING SPIRITS**" ?

Hmmm . . .

We move mountains by first moving ourselves, and the way we educate makes all the difference in the world. The choice is ours. We make the difference. It is we who decide to live, or not live, our visions. We are the creators of the world and realities we live in. We are the ones who must choose the path of our own learning. (Cajete, 1994, p. 68)

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Appendix A
Data Collection and Methodology

Data Collection and Methodology - Collective Narrative

The intent of this study was to describe how students learning to teach gain knowledge through storytelling, written and oral. The data was collected from stories in five chapters of a teaching autobiography, written by my participants as a course assignment in the pre-intern class. Each time the pre-interns return from a field experience (one and two-week modules), we have a sharing circle to reflect on the experience and the pre-interns' personal growth and development as student teachers. Also included in the data, for this study, was the transcription of an oral storytelling session with my participants during the four-month internship. This session offered us the opportunity to reconnect and model the experience these students had while they were pre-interns. Through storytelling, my participants explore their ongoing story of self in relation to their experiences as lived, relived and told.

I wanted to present the stories of my students in a way that was meaningful and as a description of the meanings I gain, as their teacher, when I receive their stories. I wanted to present the stories of my students in a way that would represent the power and magic I feel when I read their stories and participate in a sharing circle with them. I did not feel comfortable giving them pseudonyms because this was not authentic as to who they are as human beings. It did not feel right. Writing my students' stories as collective narrative, followed by my reflections as the way I gain knowledge through story, provided

me with a methodology that was authentic, meaningful and holistic. The collective narratives describe the experiences of the students as a unified whole, the way I receive them, and represent the voice of the collective as I know them. The collective narratives represent a form of community knowledge that is gained in the sharing of stories.

After reading each of the autobiographies four or five times, I began to code themes, as I interpreted them. Each theme, I began to realize, was related to “relationship” - their relationship with self, others and the world of learning to teach. I began to see how all of the individual stories folded into one story to create the knowledge they had as a collective group. And, I began to see how their stories folded into my stories. By writing my reflections following each collective narrative, I describe the ways I create knowledge from the lived experiences of self and others. As I wrote the narratives and reflected through storytelling, I best describe the interconnection between who we are as students and teachers with who we are as human beings. The story of this thesis unfolded in the telling, as I, the narrator, sequenced the stories to make meaning of our lives as students and teachers. The collective narratives and my reflections allowed me the opportunity to tell this story by connecting my heart with my mind, by honouring the voice of my participants as a collective community and by representing an authentic expression of our ways of knowing.

The story segments I included would not perhaps be those chosen by another narrator. The story of this thesis is embedded in my on going story of

self. I expect my story will be different when I tell it again; I will make new meanings. Stories are like that, you know.

Appendix B
Participant Responses to Thesis

Participant Responses to Thesis

After completing this thesis, I asked my nine participants to read the document to verify the authenticity of their words. I asked if they would respond in writing with a short description of their identity and a response to the story as written. I share with you their responses. (* will designate each speaker)

* I am a Metis woman born and raised in a rural community. I am married and have three sons aged 18, 15 and 11. I have now completed my Bachelor of Education through SUNTEP, Prince Albert.

Just a few comments. This 'story' reflects so much of the essence of our SUNTEP family. It brings to light the importance of each of our stories in the journey of discovery which we all embark on every day. It is an interesting, enjoyable and meaningful read. Thank you for allowing me to be part of it! You have definitely used my 'story' in a good way.

* I am a Metis woman, a daughter, a sister, an auntie and a friend. And now, after a profound journey, I have earned the honour of being called a teacher and a learner. I will convocate this spring [1998] with a Bachelor of Education degree earned at SUNTEP, given by the University of Saskatchewan.

I was awed by the strength, compassion, forgiveness, and wisdom of the stories and humbled by my inclusion in this group of amazing women. When

you are struggling through and consumed by the pressures of university requirements, at times you lose focus of the essence of the journey. These stories drew me back to the essence of this experience we call SUNTEP. Thank you for giving us voice, valuing our stories and honouring our journey to becoming the teachers and people we are meant to be.

* I am a single mother of three, ages 14, 11 and 7. I completed my Bachelor of Education in April, 1998. I am Metis and from Meadow Lake.

Fantastic how you were able to combine different personal stories to create one. You are able to put thoughts, feelings and meaning into words beautifully. Expressing how story assists in learning and growing in written words is quite an accomplishment. Rereading my stories together with others allowed me to reflect and learn all the more about myself and teaching.

* I am a Metis mother of one who chose to return to school in hopes of providing a better life and future for my daughter. Education has opened many doors for me holistically: mentally, physically, socially and spiritually. I will always continue to grow and learn throughout my life's journey.

* I am a twenty-six year old Metis woman. I, at times, struggle to maintain the balance of being many people: mother, wife, teacher and student. I have a five year old daughter and have been married for four years. I can honestly say

that SUNTEP has changed my life personally. It has given me many stories to tell.

The voice [in this thesis] is a strong emotional character/spirit. It combines many stories into learning, relations, and reflections.

* I am a wife, mother, student and friend. I am 32 years old, have been married for 13 years, and have a daughter who is 11 years old. I enjoy traveling and spending time with my family and friends. Life is precious.

* I am twenty-six years old. I am married and have two children. I began SUNTEP in 1994. The experiences that I have endured through this program have forever changed my life. I am very grateful and thankful for having met such wonderful people in this program.

The story of Touching Spirits is a wonderful story about the experiences that one endures through the program. I can relate to many of the thoughts and feelings in this thesis. I am very happy that you, Sandy, have written such a wonderful story on a difficult topic. So many people have the feelings but don't know how to express themselves and you have done that in a beautiful way. Thank you for using some of my words. You are a kind, caring and a very special person. Thank you for everything that you have done for me. You have influenced me in many ways.

* I am a First Nations woman from the Montreal Lake Cree Nation. I am just about married. I have four children and was just blessed with an adopted son. I am currently finishing my third year of education.

What I have read has touched me in a way that has made me see how unique we are as individuals. This thesis talks about life as we see it and the experiences we have gained. It is a journey that I am blessed to have been a part of and a journey I love to share. Thank you Sandy. It is an honour.

* I am a Metis educator from Ile-a-la-Crosse. I am the youngest child of ten and the fourth child to receive a Bachelor of Education Degree. I am very fortunate to be a SUNTEP graduate.

This piece of literature is definitely a piece that brings tears to your eyes. Educators are sure to find a situation that they have experienced in the classroom.

Appendix C
Agreement and Consent Form

Agreement and Consent Form

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student in the Department of Curriculum Studies, at the University of Saskatchewan. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for my master's thesis, my research project is to tell and reflect upon the stories of my pre-intern students and the meaning they make of learning to teach. My story, as I am a part of the process, will be interwoven with the stories of my students. The title of my study is Touching Spirits: Story and Relationship in an Aboriginal Teacher Education Program.

My study will be important to teacher education in that we will be given the opportunity to share our voice, through stories of experience, and thus participate in the community of teacher preparation. This study is also important because it provides an opportunity for Metis and First Nations women to share their knowledge in a way that is culturally relevant.

Your participation in this study will include stories you have written in your teaching autobiographies, and a concluding chapter to your autobiography that you will write at the end of your internship. This chapter will be a part of your course requirements for Educational Foundations 435.3, a post-internship class. I will visit you once during your internship and story with you about your experience. A tape recorder will be used during this conversation and transcribed into written text. The transcriptions will be provided to you and you will be asked to complete the Data Release Form and to give your consent to use the material of your choice. All tapes and transcripts will be destroyed after formal acceptance of my master's thesis by the University of Saskatchewan has been granted. Pseudonyms will be used in the study in order to provide anonymity to you as a participant. Your participation in my study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time without any academic penalty or loss of confidentiality and take your personal data with you.

I will honour and respect, at all times, your participation in this study.
Thank you.

I agree to participate in this study as outlined above with Sandra Sherwin-Shields:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

If you require further information, please call me at 747-3767 or 764-1797

Sandra Sherwin-Shields: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D
Data Release Form

Consent Form:

I have reviewed all data collected and used in Sandra Sherwin-Shields' study, titled Touching Spirits: Story and Relationship in an Aboriginal Teacher Education Program, for it's accuracy and interpretation. I have made changes I feel necessary. I am, under these conditions, in agreement for the release of this information for use in your thesis in the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

If you require further information, please call me at 764-3767 or 764-1797

Sandra Sherwin-Shields: _____

Date: _____